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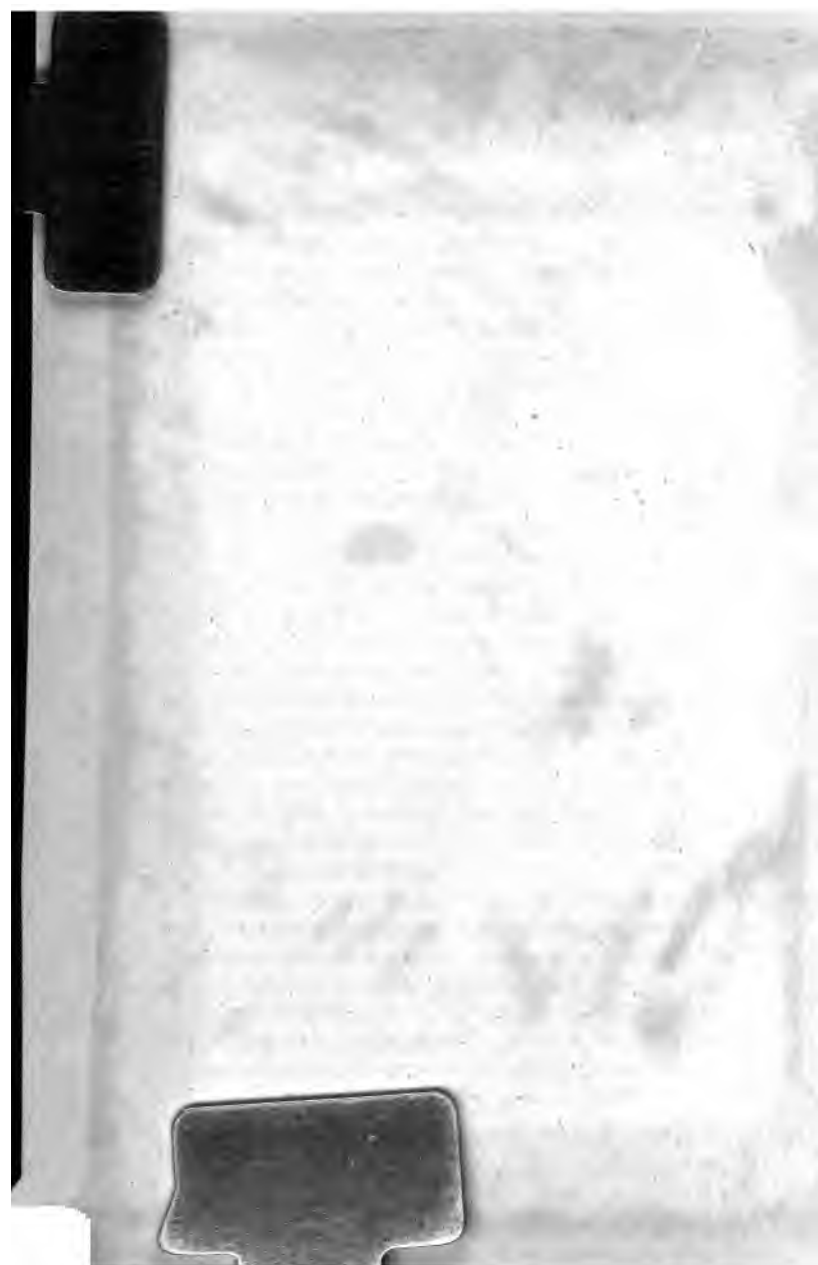
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IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

AN EIGHTFOLD ANSWER,

BY JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A.







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BY

*JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A., LL.B., B.Sc.*



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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following citations will introduce these sermons on  
"Is Life worth Living" better than any other words I  
know :—

James Hinton asks, in a mood of dejection, but himself,  
meanwhile, animated and sustained by a victorious faith in  
the Son of God —

"When we regard the general tone of feeling of our age,  
whether as expressed in its literature, in its social inter-  
course or even more, perhaps, in its amusements, do we  
not find ourselves in presence of a society from which real  
gladness has well nigh died out, in which hope is almost  
extinct?"

An answer to that enquiry is given with measured



calmness and beautiful balance, by F. W. Robertson in the following words—

“The aspect of this life is stern, very stern. It is a very superficial account of it which slurs over its grave mystery, and refuses to hear its low deep undertone of anguish. But there is enough, from hour to hour, of bright, sunny happiness, to remind us that the Creator's name is Love.”

Hence the language of Jean Paul is not overweighted—

‘ Many think themselves to be truly God-fearing when they call this world a valley of tears. But I believe they would be more so, if they called it a happy valley. God is more pleased with those who think everything right in the world, than with those who think nothing right. With so many thousand joys, is it not black ingratitude to call the world a place of sorrow and torment?’

Therefore, men, charged to preach the “good news” of God's Salvation to their fellows, do well to heed these words of the acute and philosophical Emerson :—

“Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions.

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PREFACE.

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v.

Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. When that is spoken which has a right to be spoken, the chatter and criticism will stop. Set down nothing that will not help somebody :

For every gift of noble origin  
Is breathed upon by Hope's eternal breath."

But the *authority* for such a care-dispelling, heart-cheering, life-enriching message is in Christ Himself, and in Him only. Paul knew Him, and therefore said "Rejoice in the Lord always ; and again I say, Rejoice." He is "the joy of the whole earth," "The Light of the world," "the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; no man cometh to the FATHER but by Him."

These sermons, addressed to the actual difficulties, and real perplexities of men ; have helped some in their way to Christ Jesus, and thereby to a more serviceable and joyous life ; and I have no deeper desire than that they may, by His enriching grace, be of some such use in this printed form.



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No doubt it is *like* the old question discussed with such fulness and variety in the book of Ecclesiastes centuries ago, and presented with such singular beauty and fascination in the search for the "Holy Grail" of our Poet Laureate, a few years since; and which when reduced to its simplest terms is nothing else than, what is the *summum bonum* of life, the *best object* to aim at, the *truly divine mark* toward which immortal men should press forward with an undeviating devotion and an unflagging zest. But still it is *not* the old question after all; it is broader and deeper, and more fundamental, and takes its hue, if not its rise, from other and different causes.

#### WHAT DOES THE QUESTION MEAN?

Let us therefore try to understand it. And, observe, first of all, that when Mr. Mallock and others give voice to this query they do not ask: *Is life at some special and exceptional moment, worth living*; at some particular crisis of agony over shattered hopes, broken plans, and disappointed expectations; or at some special coronation of gladness through a signal success or a sudden and unexpected access of good fortune. Address your enquiry, for example, to a man crossing the English Channel in a furious storm, and he will meet it with a vehement and crushing "No": and yet in a few hours afterwards, as he walks the streets of Paris, he is ready to regret his enforced negative and to declare that he was never so happy in his life. Interrogate another, as he stands on the mountain-height of some life-transfiguring experience, and is eager to build tabernacles for the perpetuating of his bliss, and he scorns the question as an annoying absurdity. Face the same man on the morrow as he battles in the valley with the demons of evil and is forced to hear

their laugh at his defeat; and for a moment he doubts whether your *doubt* is not well founded. All of which merely means, that life is full of variety; and *by variety is enriched*. It is a law of our experience that we learn by contrast, increase our "living" by the aid of these vicissitudes, have more to live with, and more to live for, and ascend on the burning stairs of pain to the amply furnished mansions of human well-being. Life is by no means monotonous: it has sunlit hills on whose summits the soul is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and valleys where the miasma-filled air hangs heavily and existence becomes a questionable good: luminous moments, where all is clear and beautiful, and this seems the best of all possible worlds; and hours of darkness with "cups of suffering at the lips" rebellion stirring in the heart, and life is at its worst: a Spring, beating with life, bursting with foliage and fragrant with flowers; and "a bitter winter of discontent" with its frozen streams, wild storms, and barren wastes: and by all this wonderful variety is made a richer and a nobler possession.

And, as the question is not one of exceptional moments so it is not merely whether the *whole sum of the world's life*, at all times, and in all parts of the earth is worth living, in India and in England, in Pitcairn's Island and in London;—to the youth dwelling in the sunny south, basking underneath the olive trees, or refreshing himself at nature's fountains on the cluster-loaded vine; and to the motherless bairn who huddles for shelter in a broken barrel under a railway arch in this city;—to the strong, robust, and untutored savage, and to the refined and philosophic Saxon; to the laughing, romping child, and to the weary invalid watching with eager eye for the morning of eternity to dawn, and usher her



spirit to the rest of God. No! it is not a question of statistics or of arithmetic, of careful calculations as to what men have or have not found in life. We have not the means to answer in any exact and verifiable way that old and far-reaching interrogation as to the relative amounts of the two sums of happiness and misery amongst men; though we may find probabilities enough to guide us to the conclusion that we need not disturb our faith in our Father's wisdom, or in His triumphant goodness.

The question then really is, are the conditions of human life to-day such, that we may, if we will, win such a prize as will make it a restful, serene, and glad experience, a true satisfaction, a real pleasure to live? Is each man's life worth living, if an "utter blank stares him on the other side of the curtain of death"? Suppose we have no faith in immortality, are the conditions of our mortality such that we may honestly conclude existence is not a curse, and humanity a mistake; and that we may be grateful for our being here, where we are and what we are!

#### AN OMINOUS SIGN.

Now at the outset, I wish to say that it is not altogether a satisfactory social symptom that such a question has urged itself forward into our discussions in these later years. When a man begins to listen to the beatings of his heart, or asks the physician to apply the stethoscope to test the motions of his lungs, it is very likely there is something wrong with him. Healthy children don't ask for stethoscopes; they live, and enjoy living. And when men coldly speculate as to whether "life is worth living," we may be sure that it is ominous of a wide-spread despair of the means of human satisfaction; a sign, indeed, that "un-

belief" has carried men to the last question it can put. It has urged the other questions: "Is there a God?" "Is there a future life?" "Is there any abiding righteousness?" and now it caps the series with the words "Is life itself worth living?" The root of these questions is one; as the root of our religious, and political, and vital difficulties is one. Men cannot despair of God without despairing of immortality; nor can they cease to lay hold of God and of faith in first causes, in hidden, and unseen, and eternal forces, without relaxing their faith in righteousness. "Corruption in political life is really scepticism," and springs from derangement of faith; from the preference of "interests" to the principles of duty, and of "rascality" to "righteousness;" and the issue of all this must be an utter breakdown of confidence in the worth and serviceableness of human life. Scepticism says its worst and its last word when it declares that human existence is a huge and worthless burden.

But that is only one side of the fact. Viewed from the other, this enquiry is a significant witness to the possible nobleness of man's nature, to his dissatisfaction with a fragmentary and incomplete existence, to his divinely-begotten yearning for the highest, and the best, and the holiest. Man is made to live the worthiest of lives; made for peace, though it be through struggle; for strength, through strain and work; and for joy through self-surrender. It is the "withheld completions of life" that tantalize him and force him in his impatience to find fault with his lot. He cannot get full possession of the Truth for himself and therefore he turns away from her fair face when she lifts up the veil. He is unable to move with absolute freedom; and so he chafes and frets against the barriers to his liberty. His

questions are not all answered when he knows "what he shall eat," and "what he shall drink," and "wherewithal he shall be clothed." He has a nature that hungers for divine food, and though his prayer is put into the language of bitterness and despair, still his real cry is for that bread of everlasting life which the Father gave to the world in Christ Jesus His Son.

#### THE DIVINE ANSWER AT HAND.

And we are sure of this, beloved friends, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, our Father, who has never yet failed to answer the questions of His child, does not withhold the answer to *this* question: and He gives that answer in a manner that man can understand, appreciate and use; and bases it upon those permanent facts of daily life and experience, which are within the range of each one of us. Never has God said to men, "Seek ye my face in vain:" and never will He!

#### BUT THE ANSWER IS NOT IN POPERY.

That divine answer we unhesitatingly say is not found in the response of Mr. Mallock. This teacher would fain lift us out of the entangling meshes of scepticism in order to place us in the iron grip of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus he reasons; life is not worth living without faith in God and in immortality, and faith in God and immortality can only be obtained by faith in the Pope, and in the body of religious and irreligious dogmas he has enunciated. Can anything be more prodigiously and wantonly absurd? A man must go to Jesuitical Rome to learn how to live! Life is not worth living except by the acceptance of a body of traditional teaching which hides God and His Son Jesus Christ from the

soul, and banishes men to the cruel comforts of wearisome mechanical activities! What forsooth! is life at its best in that Paradise of Popery—the eternal city? What was Rome, but a seething mass of corruptions, before Victor Emmanuel cleansed it with the broom of Freedom! Is the “record” of the Papacy, with its Alexander Borgia and its “traffic in indulgences” so sublimely true and inspiring that we must needs repair to it to know how to live! History flouts the idea as an absurdity, bigger and more gross than all others, and reflection compels the conclusion that Mr. Mallock’s answer is but another and subtler form of unbelief “in the *living* God, who is the Saviour of all men and specially of those who believe,” and that it will as surely conduct us to abject worthlessness, though not at so rapid a rate, nor in so manifest a way, as gross and open sin.

#### THE GENERAL RESPONSE OF LIFE ITSELF.

We are far nearer, my brethren, to the divine answer, when we listen to the “rough and ready” verdict passed every new morning, by humanity upon the value of its own life. With one consenting voice, men say, “let us live; life is sweet, at least more sweet than bitter. We prefer to enjoy it; it has such pungent pleasures, and the exercise of its functions brings us so much happiness, that we elect to live.” Writing on this very subject, an author reports, that Mr. Horace Greeley, the famous American editor and politician, was once asked by Mr. Curtis, “How do you know, Mr. Greeley, when you have succeeded in a public address;” Mr. Greeley replied, “When more stay in than go out.” Mr. Mallock’s question is practically voted on every day by the entire human race and decided in the affirmative.”\* It is so. “More stay

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\* SCRIBNER for November, 1879, p. 142.

in than go out." Notwithstanding all the pain and suffering of our mortal lot: "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Self-extinction is horrible, and men count it a sign of insanity. With an utter aversion, they shrink from making "their quietus with a bare bodkin," and this, not because they have the Roman Catholic faith, nor yet because they dread "the something after death," nor even because they are perfectly happy, but chiefly from the consciousness that living is itself, in the main, a sweet and blessed thing.

"There is a pleasure in conscious being." As I sat in my study this morning, the birds made merriest music and poured forth their gladness in lengthened song; they were alive and living was precious to them. The kitten that gambols all over the floor with such irrepressible exuberance, tells us what a bright cheery thing young life is. Our children, with their spontaneous energy and exhaustless fund of play show us what life is as it comes freshly from Him who is the source of all delight. Of course, there are many and sad exceptions,—minor notes in this orchestral music of praise. "Job spake and said, let the day perish on which I was born. Let that day be darkened, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it, let a cloud dwell upon it for ever." But he said this, in a frenzy of impatience and short-sightedness, and he lived, to write over it, the fact that the Lord had blessed him more, in "his latter end than in his beginning;" and, moreover, to become for ever a warning against hasty judgment on isolated experiences, and an illustration of the wisdom of patient and courageous trust in God. There is, no doubt, a law of pain in human life; and men know the fact well and fully, and yet that does not alter the general verdict;

still they, say it is a good thing to be born ; and they count the home happy into which a new human life comes ; though quite aware the arrival of " the little stranger " means fresh cares, new responsibilities and additional anxieties. It is an increase of the world's stock of consciously living forces, and therefore it is an occasion of real rejoicing and festive delight. It is good to be born, to be a happy healthy babe, " with heaven lying all around us in our infancy " : good to be a boy, light of heart, crowded with wistful questions, and dowered with quenchless hope ; good to be a girl, loving, tender, true and helpful ; good to be a man, with a manhood that is wise, and strong and holy, and good to reach a well-ordered and serene old age, wearing the old man's befitting crown of righteousness ! The sad thing is to die ! So say men. That is the day for mourning and lamentation ; but to live, that is sweet, that is pleasant. Life is not a mistake. The Allwise has not been overtaken in a fault. Human existence is not undiluted misery. The verdict of humanity at large, or with few dissentients, is that conscious human life is a desirable good.

#### HAPPINESS NOT THE ONLY TEST.

But even supposing the voice of the people did not affirm, that life is happy : and voted to " go out " rather than " stay in," it would not follow that life is not worth living. Happiness is not the only or the highest test of value. Discipline is not pleasant, and yet it is of high service. The drill that fits the student for the examination room is irksome, and it is with apprehension and dread the examiners are faced, but subjection to drill is a prime condition of efficiency. Duty is not always pleasant and yet obedience to its mandates brings the best and most enduring

wealth. The law of pain is unwelcome, but it is finely and uniquely beneficent. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Life has other worth, than its sweetness and pleasantness, and if these were wholly absent, still, it would be worth living.

The Divine affirmation that life is worth living may be heard in *four classes of vital and permanent facts in our experience; in its LOVES, its WORK, its HOPES and its GOD.*

#### THE WORTH OF THE LOVES OF LIFE.

No one, who has looked into life with honest eyes, can have failed to discover that it derives untold values from the love which welcomes its dawn, attends its growth and advance, step by step, and soothes and cheers its old age. Human love is itself a pearl of great price. How it enlarges, enriches and ennobles life! What force it evolves! What beneficent ministries it conducts! What patient heroism and severe self-suppression it inspires! In a mother it is faith and hope, and patience and effort and victory. In young hearts it is a transforming gladness, an awakening to the responsibility and to the rapture of life. In manhood and womanhood it is the balm of care, a refuge in temptation and a source of serenity. Even the *memory* of a pure love is a hallowing inspiration. "Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Bishop Wilberforce goes through his multitudinous labours for years, sustained, and chastened and sanctified, by the recollection of the love of the gentle and

faithful wife of his early manhood ! Speaking of the beloved dead our greatest poet says :

“The idea of their life doth sweetly creep  
Into our study of imagination :  
And every lively organ of their life  
Doth come unparalleled in more precious habit,  
More moving delicate and full of life  
Into the eye and prospect of our souls,  
Than when they lived indeed.”

Yes, friends, while human loves are possible, the love of home, and of kindred and of country, life will be redeemed from much of its corruptness, and will be well worth living !

#### THE VALUE OF DUTY.

Again, in keeping the commandments concerning human work there is great reward. Work, well and faithfully done, leads to worth. “ You know what interest any *real* business has for me,” said one of the most capable ecclesiastical leaders of our day. It is so, to most of us. To have a vocation is to have an interest ; a reason for living ; and a means of acquiring value. Fortunately for most of us, we have not to look for our own work. It comes. It is at hand. We need it, or its results. We take hold of it, and the interest in it deepens and grows forthwith. Guided by the star of duty, millions of earth’s pilgrims have discovered wealth far more valuable than all the coin they have accumulated, or property they have acquired. Doing well their daily work, in obedience to the dictates of necessity and conscience, they have increased their capacity, enlarged their interest in existence



and added to the wealth of their character. Life will not cease to be an object of desire while duty waits to be done, and the mandate to work is heard uttered with all the combined and resistless authority of strong necessity; abiding instinct, and prospective pleasure.

#### OUR WEALTH IN HOPE.

Tholuck has said that "the Jew is a man of the future." In this respect the Jew is human and only human; for while achievements rank high in the worth of every people's life, hope soars far above them, and exerts a more potent influence. "It springs immortal in the human breast;" brightens the saddest day with its soft light; allures us on to fresh effort after the worst defeat; and knits into a beautiful unity the broken and fragmentary efforts of our lives. "Work without hope," says Coleridge, "draws nectar in a sieve." With it, the nectar is a durable possession and a ceaseless stimulus. We have not yet attained. It will be better on the morrow. Not even scepticism in its most violent forms can kill hope in men. They *will* hope in something or somebody. If you take away God, they will bring in Humanity, and put that in His place. You can more easily destroy us than make us cease to hope. Thus, experience and instinct, lead us on from weakness to strength, from defeat to achievement, from achievement to effort, until we shall be made perfect and complete. Humanity blankly refuses to die in despair!

#### GOD IS OURS.

And with reason! for hope is eternally here, because the God of Hope is here; and duty is here, because the God of

Conscience is here; and love is here, because the God of Love is here. He really is. Man is not an orphan, and he feels that he is not. There is more faith in God than the books report, or the churches recognise. *God is in life. He is the source of its permanent and eternal elements; of its fixed conditions and facts; and He is the supreme solace and the real help of souls.* He is in life, and His favour is life, for us and in us; and His lovingkindness is better, sweeter, richer, helpfuller than life itself; and we know it, and have tasted the love that God hath toward us, and hath manifested in Jesus Christ His Son, so that we are assured, that life was never more worth living, than on this morning of February 22nd, 1880; but that it will be worth more to-morrow than it is to-day; and still more, next year than now; because, throughout all the ages His "increasing purpose" of grace and human redemption "runs," and "the thoughts of men are widened," the hearts of men enlarged, and their lives ennobled "with the circling of the suns."

And whence, my friends, came this conviction and this experience? Who led us to this estimate of our condition? Who? But He who lived the worthiest life ever lived; and in whom *love* for men was an unquenchable passion, a love even unto death; and whose *work* for them was intense, and devoted, and is endless in its issues; and from whom comes a *hope* that throws its halo over the grave, and sends its clear radiance into eternity; and by whom we have fellowship with *God* our Father, and our life here, and hereafter.

It is He; Christ Jesus, the all-worthy. Let us worship Him. *Worth* comes of pure and right *worship*! the worship of the Best and Highest, and Holiest. He is the Best, and Highest, and Holiest. Worship Him, and so learn how to love, with a love that is unstained by selfish aims, and un-

checked by cruel rebuffs. Worship Him, and find the consecration of duty and the sanctification of work! Worship Him, and be pure as He is pure, and animated with the hope of the inheritance, that is undefiled and that fadeth not away. So shall men see in us, God's affirmation that life is worth living, a divine privilege, a present and real joy, and an ever increasing beatitude.



## No. 2.—The Answer of Moses.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY tells us in the beginning of his work on "the Crayfish" that "Science is simply common sense at its best, i.e., rigidly accurate in observation and merciless to fallacy in logic," and that "common sense is science, exactly in so far as it fulfils the ideal of common sense: that is to say, sees facts as they are, or at any rate, without the distortion of prejudice, and reasons from them in accordance with the dictates of sound judgment;" and then he proceeds to exemplify the general truths respecting the development of Zoological Science by the study of the *special case* of the Crayfish.

Is it possible, my friends, to face the question we are now considering, and on the answer to which so much is staked, in this scientific spirit, and to treat it in such a courageously common sense way; always being severely accurate in observation, unflinchingly logical in reasoning, and remorselessly surrendering every cherished prejudice, that does not accord with the unimpeachable conclusions, drawn from correctly investigated facts?

No doubt, the broad, persistent and fundamental facts of

persistently cherished a temper of loving trustfulness toward the Eternal God.

I. It is a sad hour, my brethren, when a man of forty years of age, has to ask himself whether he is on the right track, and may continue to press toward the mark, he has had in his eye for twenty or thirty years, or must stand still, make a new choice, follow that with a new departure, and, in short, create a new career. Such a thought is one of the bitterest poignancy, and known only to those who have felt it. To *pull yourself up*, fibre by fibre, bit by bit, out of a kindly soil in which you have been planted and have grown for a quarter of a century, and for aught you know to be flung by the roadside, slowly to rot like a tree, uprooted by fierce winds: or else to set yourself amid wintry blasts and ungenial storms in a new, loose and unpropitious mould! Ah! that is a stifling misery! No wonder clouds and darkness are about the soul in such an hour; that chagrin, despair, and a whole brood of evils, pounce on the sufferer like greedy vultures on their hapless prey. Yes, it is then, existence seems a mistake, the world a chaos, the future a starless night, faith in God an irritating impertinence, and the devil lord of all!

And yet this is the predicament in which Moses finds himself "when he is come to years." His fortune seems to be tantalizingly cruel. His sympathies are with his oppressed and much-enduring fellow-Hebrews; but his place is in the Court of the oppressor; and he owes all his dignities and advantages to being treated as the son of the oppressor's daughter. His conscience, his mother and his God tell him that his work is for God's people; but his fate, not his choice, has made him dependent for every precious thing he has,

upon a despot under whose tyranny his fellow-countrymen groan day and night. Chafed, irritated, agitated, at his wits end, he asks, "What shall I do?" How shall I act?" "I am in a strait betwixt two." "Shall I forego the legitimate rewards of my past toil; the tender associations of youth and early manhood, the brilliant prospects of a political or priestly career, on a mere hazard, an improbable chance of doing any good! "Why should I not" whispered tempting voices, "stay where I am, acquire all I can, enjoy all I can? Who knows? I may help the Goshen brick-makers better here than if I led them off on a wild search for freedom through a trackless and barren desert."

Don't you sympathise with this man in the severity of his struggle? Can't you feel the throbbings of his agitated heart? Think! For forty years he has been building his fortunes upon well-secured foundations; course has followed course in orderly succession; there are symmetry, beauty, capacity and fine promise in the noble structure. Shall he throw up his tools, leave it where it is, and begin to dig for foundations again at a distance of fifteen days journey from the advantages and excitements of this metropolitan city? Remember! His career is one of marvellous adventure, of unparalleled advantage. Stars more frequently fall from their places than men start at so low a point, and rise to one so high. The foundling of the Nile is nursed amid the splendour of a palace. The child of the proscribed and hated Hebrew race is educated in the University of an Empire that takes front rank for learning in the civilized world. Not a single department of the capacious temple of Egyptian wisdom is closed against this strange intruder. Political greatness allures his capable nature with its thrilling excitements. The keys of office hang at his girdle. A keen

ambition, fed by conscious strength, wide culture and ever expanding prospects, goads him on. There is nothing wealth can give he cannot have ; nothing in position, in honour, in government, in pleasure, excepting the regal power itself, that is not waiting his will. Even Joseph himself had not so entrancing and so captivating a prospect. Young men in the flush of life's ambitions, I appeal to you, was it a light thing to be poised between these two courses, to stand at this "parting of the ways," and to be forced to ask, " must I cut myself off from all these pleasures of intellect and of heart; trample under foot these splendid prizes of place and power, turn the key on the door of these stores of learning, fling it in the Nile; and go forth into the barren wilderness of a blank suspense and a nameless responsibility, merely because a stern voice is heard within, saying:

'Choose well, thy choice is brief but endless?''

Brave, bold man! We admire and applaud the heroism that dares to look with steadfast eye upon THIS MOMENTOUS AND APPALLING PROBLEM.

II. What Moses did with the problem he thus faced is graphically stated in four particulars:—

(1) "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and so renounced his title to the dignities, honours, and emoluments of a King's son; and gave up his sceptre of dominion over his own fortunes in the future.

(2) "He chose *rather* to suffer affliction with the people of God;" preferred a partnership with God's sons and daughters in wretchedness and misery to the prodigious heritage of a monarch's favourite; and the gratification of a life of sense, intellect, and ambition.

(3) Above all, he ranked "the reproach" of being like Christ Jesus, a sufferer for the welfare of his kith and kin, a helper of needy men, far greater treasures than all the dazzling wealth of Pharaoh's court.

(4) And, chiefly, he forsook Egypt itself; the sphere of his enjoyments, the centre of life-long satisfactions, the theatre of splendour and greatness, and plunged into the weird silences of the desert of Sinai, and braved for nearly half a century the sombre monotony of a shepherd's toils.

Thus, he solved the problem he faced, by a complete renunciation of all those things, men mistakenly think, alone make life worth living; its highest prizes; its most valuable gains. With the sharp sword of Duty he decisively cuts the bands, strong as twisted cable, which hold him to Egypt, and, although regretfully yet heroically; with a tear, yet without misgiving, he separates himself from *civilization*, with its command of wealth and ease and enjoyment; from *society*, with its exciting pleasures, and manifold exhilarations; from *culture* and all that centres in and springs from it, the sense of increasing power, and the joy of acquisition; and from the pride of an authority and the chances of a grand career; and turning his back on all these, as they were symbolized in the thronged bazaars, the decorated fountains, the lofty and ornamented houses, the massive temples of the Capital City, he set out for . . . what?

Yes, my friends, for what? Could he in that year of daring choice *tell* for what? Did he know what he should gain? His losses loomed largely before him, and crowded his horizon; but his gains, where were they? What were they? Did he know? No, God does not give us a ledger account of our deeds before they are performed. Moses made his choice, as we have to make ours, *wholly in the dark* as to the earthly



and outward results ; he knew what he was giving up ; but he did not see the long and painful forty years silence that would intervene between him and his next stroke of work for the cause, that was so dear to his heart. He knew not what *might* be ; and yet he had chosen ; and chosen duty rather than pleasure, love of his country-men before the love of himself, devotion to the welfare of men instead of a career of bloated self-indulgence ; to act according to his conscience rather than his temporary interest, to follow principle rather than "profit ;" and having made his choice he bravely took all it involved. For, although he knew not what *might* be, he was perfectly certain as to what *must* be. He *might* suffer ignominious expatriation from Egypt for the rest of his days and be without shelter and society in a strange land ; but he *must* still have his dwelling place in the Eternal God, his home in the God of his fathers and of all generations. He *might* be stripped of place and position, prestige and power ; but he *must* retain the benediction of his conscience, for

"What stronger breast-plate" is there "than a heart untainted" ?

Thrice is he armed, that hath his quarrel just ;  
And he but naked, though locked up in steel  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

He *might* be flung out of the loaded lap of luxury on to the torturing rack of suspense and held there for many years ; but he *must* have the favour of God, which is life, and His loving-kindness which is better than life. He *might* never see the reward of his chivalric effort to deliver the Hebrews from their despotic rulers ; but the thing was right, and all right things *must* be victorious some day.

Rooted and grounded in these convictions, Moses elected to stand on the side of the *eternal necessities* against all comers and in spite of all consequences, rather than to discredit and debase himself by following the false glare of things seen and temporal ; and in that choice he SOLVED FOR EVER THE CHIEF PROBLEM OF HIS LIFE.

III. Nor was his solution a mistake. He waited long and patiently and at last the oppressive silence was broken : the mandate which constituted him the Leader and Deliverer of Israel was heard ; the blazing fire of the Divinely authenticated presence was seen in the desert into which he had been driven, and in his eightieth year the difficult and responsible task of emancipator, legislator, moral and spiritual builder of the Hebrew people, was undertaken. So, he found that life was well worth living, if only, duty were done, the love of men had free course, conscience was heeded and God obeyed ; and that although the values of certain parts of life, might seem lost for ever ; and, of other parts delayed indefinitely ; yet the hour had struck which proved that *all his life had been worth living* ; and that by his wise and valourous choice he had put the greatest worth into the whole of his career ; into its earlier as well as its later portions ; into that part of it spent in the house of Pharaoh, and amongst the priests and students of Egypt, not less than into the hour of reverent awe before the burning bush ; into the forty years of wandering as a shepherd in the valleys and beneath the beetling cliffs of Sinai, no less than the supreme moment in which the victorious song was chanted on the banks of the Red Sea, " The Lord hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea ; the Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

*The values of our deeds are not all realizable at once. We have to wait before we can "cash" some of our notes, may be, wait painfully long; but we need not fear; if the notes are drawn on the bank of righteousness, they never fall below their true price, and they are sure to be paid in full sooner or later.*

(1.) To Moses *himself* life was undeniably well worth living: not less so, but more so, immeasurably more, for its total separation from the wealth and greatness of the Egyptian power. For the worth of living was not in the *things* he left: but in the spirit in which he handled the things; and the manner in which he gave to God and Duty the absolute control of himself and them. Therefore, though he has, as fully detached himself from those things, as a racer from his impeding robes, he had only found that he had increased his chances of winning the incorruptible crown. His right choice had brought him peace, calmness, and joy, strength and worth of character, and the strong consolations of God. He had borne "the grand severities" of a life of penury and self-denial and suffering; and "found they had created the grander glories" of purity and goodness. His losses had been all gains; his sacrifices, rewards; his afflictions, joys; and his struggles victories. Ewald says of him: "he possessed a soul of extraordinary greatness and worked with wonderful power." Michael Angelo makes the silent marble eloquent in praise of the sublimity of one of the noblest characters humanity has known; and history turns to him as a striking example of the saying of the greatest of Teachers: "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesses"; but in "the riches of his heart towards God."

(2.) The value of the life of Moses to *others*, all are eager

to admit. Bunsen declares "History was born in that night when Moses with the law of God, moral and spiritual in his heart, led the people of Israel out of Egypt." Ewald describes him as "an unparalleled hero who sustains the grandeur of two perfectly distinct yet equally exalted epochs." One of the highest witnesses reminds us that "the law came by Moses," and is only inferior and introductory to "the grace and truth which came by Jesus." Indeed, the hero who after forty years' experience bravely left the Egyptian Court in obedience to God and from love to His people; and with greater bravery spent the next forty years in the desert waiting the divine will; and the third forty of his life in executing that will, has traversed all the ages since, and by his laws, his example and influence, is still guiding and stimulating the progress and enriching the lives of men. Moses forsook Egypt, but found Israel and humanity. He gave up his heritage from the Princess of the Nile, and created an inheritance for all men. He was rich, but became poor so that the Hebrews through his poverty might be made rich. Assuredly that man is far gone in indiscriminate and unreasoning scepticism, who does not see in the career of Moses, the Mosaic method of solving life's problem VINDICATED BEYOND ALL POSSIBILITY OF DISPROOF.

IV. But, I pass on to remark, that the method of Moses is but the sign of his inward spirit; a spirit described by the comprehensive and deep-reaching words: "*by faith*." "By faith" Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; "by faith" he forsook Egypt; "by faith" he clung to God and God's people with an unquenchable hope through forty long years. This temper of trust in the living

God inspired his choice, fed his patience, converted his fiery impetuosity into steady-going strength, crowned him with meekness, and his prolonged toils for Israel with a large success.

He did not see God, but God was as real to him as his mother, and he had as keen a sense of his presence and power, as he had of that of the Egyptian taskmasters. "No man hath seen God at any time," but Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible;" he thought as though he saw Him; reasoned as if His eye were ever upon him, chose as for God and for His purposes; and in accordance with His plans. God was in all his thoughts, His vastness, His power, His endurance from age to age, His infinite compassion, His burning holiness, His pitiful love. And that presence gave him the right *estimate* of things and souls, of circumstances and of manhood, of time and eternity, and became the secret ground and operative cause, of his right *choice*, of his uncomplaining *fortitude*, and his self-slaying devotion.

"The ultimate end of education," says Professor Huxley, in an eloquent passage, "is to promote morality and refinement, by teaching men to discipline themselves, and by leading them to see that the highest, as it is the only content, is to be attained not by grovelling in the rank and steaming valleys of sense; but by continually striving towards those high peaks, where resting in eternal calm, reason discerns the undefined but bright ideal of the highest good—a cloud by day, a pillar by night." But the question returns upon us, and "*reason*" persists in repeating it, instead of answering it. What is "the highest good" for us men? Where is "the bright ideal," and how can we make it part of the real history of our lives?

Moses answers, with the authority of a long and successful experience: "By faith" in the living and loving God; in His undecaying and unconquerable love for men; and in the indefeasible reward of right-doing. This temper of trust "discerns the bright ideal of the highest good;" yields a standard of right and duty "which measures right every time" and everywhere, lifting men out of the shows and gloss of fleeting circumstances into the sphere of the everlasting; and so brings them to a life larger and richer than the most exciting of royal Courts, and the richest of learned universities; a life embracing the whole manhood, at once in the quality and in the duration of its being.

Here, then, is our case.

Is life worth living to a man who has undergone the most appalling reverse in his condition possible, who is swiftly flung off the highest pinnacle of all his greatness, and separated for ever from all the outward sources of peace, prosperity, affluence, and culture?

Ask Moses that question; and his answer is "Yes! gloriously so, provided that

- (1.) It be a life of active faith in God,
- (2.) In His love of goodness and righteousness.
- (3.) In His loving work for the welfare of men, and
- (4.) By consequence, a life of sympathy with the suffering, and of zeal for the triumph of the rule of God in the hearts of men.

And, we too, children as we are of tribulation, can, in our measure, give a similar response; for we have been taught by a greater than Moses the same heart-gladdening, life-ennobling truths; even by Him, who though He was rich as God's Son, refused the honours of that title, and took to

Himself the name of Son of Man ; choosing rather to suffer the crushing agony of Gethsemane, and the fearful isolation of the Cross, than to enjoy the undimmed splendour of heaven for ever ; esteeming the salvation of lost men greater riches than all the treasures of the angels ; for He had respect "to the joy that was set before Him, and endured the cross, despising the same, and is now set down at the right-hand of God." He it is who has not only shown us "the bright ideal of the highest good" in this life ; but led us to realize it, in courageous war against wrong, unfaltering devotion to duty, absorbing interest in His kingdom ; calm content, warm sympathy, deep peace, and immortal hope ; so that we have an over-mastering conviction that with Him is the secret of a happy, serene, holy, and useful life ; and that His words are sure of fulfilment, wherever accepted, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly of heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

May that temper of trust ever pervade us ; and then it shall be given us to show how restful, patient, strong, aggressive, and serviceable is a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us !



## No. 5.—A Brave Prophet Tired of Life.

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, ‘It is enough, now O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.’  
1 Kings xix, 4.

I SUPPOSE there have been few better or braver men than he who uttered that bitter and weak lament. Amongst the memorable heroes, who have defied the iron despotisms of kings, turned to flight the armies of invading aliens, risen up in single-handed majesty against the strongly-organised forces of States and Parliaments, and pitted their inward convictions against the combined powers of kings and society, the prophet Elijah is a supreme instance. Even Luther, “the solitary monk that shook the world” does not surpass him in moral intrepidity. Queen-defying, death-



daring John Knox does not take rank before him, for strenuous courage and magnificent devotion to duty. He is the Proto-Confessor of the precious truth that Kings and Queens, Priests and Parliaments, Courts and States have no rights whatever, over, or against the human conscience and its God. And Elijah is worthy of this conspicuous leadership. He makes his confession with a dashing impetuosity, heroic heedlessness and imperturbable self-control, not surpassed by any of his successors; not even by Savonarola, the Florentine preacher, John Huss, the martyr of Constance, our own Wycliffe, the translator of the Bible: or to go to higher grounds still, not by the tranquil and eager Paul, the abstaining and fearless Daniel, or the meek and mighty Moses. His hand-to-hand fight with the 850 priests, towers amongst the stories of courage like the Matterhorn amongst the mountains of Zermatt, or Mont-Blanc in the vale of Chamouni. His splendid faith, his scathing satire, his vitriolic taunts flung at the priests who, if they had beaten, would have visited him with terrible punishment, are part of one of the most stirring spectacles of human daring the world has ever seen. The death-leap of the Roman Knight into the gaping chasm in the centre of the forum, does not approach it; the burning of the bridge by the determined general shows no finer hardihood. It is positively unequalled, it remains for ever uneclipsed.

But the cautious will surely say as they look upon the nerveless hero sulking under the juniper tree and sighing for death;

"Ah! did not we tell you? Never praise a man till he's dead. It is the last scene which tests, and vindicates or degrades all."

Is it? Then the prostrate prophet is safe: for nothing in

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## *A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 31*

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his life more became him than his mode of leaving it. The glories of Carmel are transcended by the serene boldness and divine calm with which he steps forward to meet death, separating himself from the solaces of his companion and friend Elisha, and marching forward, unattended and uncheered, into the vast Unknown. A more splendid and appropriate crown to a career of moral grandeur, profound self-forgetfulness and absorbing loyalty to God, could not have been won. Elijah fought a good fight, maintained a noble contest, and having finished his course, ascended from earth, borne in a chariot of fire, to dwell with God's victorious and sceptred sons for ever and ever.

Nevertheless, and here is the moral puzzle, it is this very prophet of Israel, this paragon of flaming zeal, and vehement indignation against weakness and irreligion—this man who dares Ahab and Jezebel, so fiercely and enters eternity, so calmly; and who is hiding yonder under that shrub, a miserable, half-maddened coward, afraid of himself and afraid of his work, and weakly moaning “‘Life is not worth living.’ It has no real prize. It yields no abiding content. I am sick and tired of it.” “It is enough, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.”

Surely, life is fearfully and wonderfully made, and it is extremely difficult, in such moods as Elijah's to know what to make of it. It has heart-breaking agonies and insoluble mysteries, that force us to question whether after all it is not more demoniacal than divine. Its face is so stern, its message so exacting: its heedless and steady march so remorselessly cruel, that we are overwhelmed with despair as to its origin and issue. Still, we may, at least, learn these four things about its changing moods, as we sit at the feet of Elijah.

I. *That an occasional spasm of tiredness of life is no proof of mental insignificance or moral unworthiness in the individual who is subject to it. It may only result from a momentary paralysis of the higher faculties of conscience and faith, aspiration and love.*

II. *The tiredness of life may only mean exhaustion after, and by, a signal and victorious out-put of force.*

III. *That it is a law of tiredness, that it is most felt, precisely in those faculties which have been most strained, and therefore may rather be an index to fine successes won, than to any ignoble defeats suffered.*

IV. *That for all tired workers, God has appropriate, refreshing and abundant solace.*

I. As the sun has his spots, the atmosphere its storms, and even old Homer himself sinks below the higher ranges of his mighty genius and sleepily "nods"; so natures attempered to fine issues, and capable of enterprises of great pith and moment, may have their seasons of exhaustion and despair, without diminishing by a hair's breadth their real greatness. Peter turned coward for an hour as he winced under the searching scrutiny and biting taunts of a servant maid. The brave Baptist began to doubt whether he had baptized the right man, when he was shut up in the prison of Machærus. John, who leant upon the bosom of his Lord, and won the eulogy of the Apostle of love, had at least one paroxysm of intolerance. Moses, the meekest of men, suffered his heart to be swept by a cyclone of indignation. And do we not know that the first and greatest of the sons of men, "the strong son of God, immortal love," was tempted to let the bitter cup of suffering fall from his hand, and did ask that, if it were possible, it might pass from him? Therefore, we are

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### *A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 33*

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not amazed when the courage of Elijah snaps in twain, and the hero of Carmel, overtaken by the petty vice of cowardice, wails out from his "*rihem*" shade: "It is enough. Life is a chagrin, work a mistake, duty a disappointment, and existence an insupportable misery. I stand alone, and I have stood long enough. I am tired of it. I am no better than my fathers were: my broken ideals are all about me. I can make no headway. Let me die and have done with it."

Have any of you a stone to fling at this Master in Israel, in the hour of his dejection, who has suddenly become as one of us, a man of like weaknesses with ourselves? If you have, hold it firmly in your hand, whilst you reflect upon the fierce energy of despair he must have heroically suppressed during the years in which his great soul sorrowed over Israel's deepening idolatries and thickening sins: and as you hear the deep undertone of anguish wrung out of him, summon to your thought the ways in which he, sudden as lightning, alarming as thunder, without a Bible, and almost without a companion, appears in a great national crisis, utters his divine message, creates a new era, takes rank as a second Moses and gives Israel a moral impetus in the war against idolatry it never wholly loses; and having fairly estimated those prodigious facts, proceed to measure the distance to that lofty altitude of service and victory, from that depth of poignant despondency, and you will feel that the prophet is not revealed as a lesser, but a greater, man by his despair; that his brotherhood with us is more manifest, and his career more significant, instructive and inspiring.

"Be it so," say you "but what avails that to us, and our nineteenth century wearinesses and despairs, deceits and oppressions, treacheries and villainies, that render the life of humanity such an insupportable burden?"

What! Why this? If Elijah is not dwarfed by his pitiable moan, and his life reduced from prophetic grandeur and heroic brilliance to pigmy littleness; then moods of despondency as to life itself, like that which is sweeping over society now, and in which men talk as though life were not worth living, work not worth doing, and pain not worth bearing; are no proof whatever that human existence has not untold blessedness in its grasp, and infinite value within its reach.

Yesterday I was in a London Police Court and saw a succession of poor, ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-trained, and unkempt women and men, brought before the magistrate for drunkenness, theft, receiving stolen goods, and similar offences; and as I observed the quivering misery depicted in one face, the callous indifference in a second, the determined wickedness in a third; for a moment I felt a pang of despair shoot through my heart and the question on my lip: "after all, is life worth living, whilst such facts as these crowd it, in thousands, and hundred of thousands. To-day I am in a sanctuary and I know something of the peace and joy of your hearts, of the sweetness and grace, the strength and victory, the consideration for others, the love of Christ and of souls, that gladden your homes and beautify your lives, and, as I multiply your experience by hundreds of thousands I recover my faith in life and its possibilities.

Again, I go to a meeting and hear not a little deserved bemoaning over the intemperance of our land, the increase of crimes of violence, the unthrift of the poor, the diffusion of doubt amongst the unoccupied and the half-occupied, the unavailing lamentations of the oppressed, the sway of misery in a hundred lands, and I am ready to say, "O Lord, it is enough, take away the life of humanity. We are no better

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## A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 35

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than our fathers, let us have a new start." But I leave and enter another and different gathering, in which readings are being given from Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, and Abbey and Overton's *Church of England in the Eighteenth Century*, descriptive of the stolid apathy of the clergy, the sluggishness of dissent, the crass ignorance and brutishness of the mass of the people, the perils of life and property in this city in broad daylight; the almost total stagnation of moral life; and as I listen, I take heart, "After all we are better than our fathers. *Our* days look worse, because *their* days are forgotten. The evil of yesterday is out of sight; that of to-day is piercing us through and through.

So, come how it may, this momentary spasm of despair; this wail about this being the worst of all possible worlds; has no more value as evidence against the worth of life itself than a boy's growing pains are proof that manhood is not better than youth, or the shriek of a patient being relieved of a polypus is witness to the worthlessness of the surgeon's operations.

But there *are* persons who get a *fixed* and permanent feeling of tiredness of life. And so they ought. They live for themselves; exist solely to gratify their sensual selves. They are an animated frivolity, an empty and irritating giggle, capable of little more than vacuous mirth, or "loving blue china," or going to the "Derby," or ceaselessly spinning round, on the whirligig of fashion. Their own essential littleness is the cause of their weariness; their frivolity is the mother of their exhaustion. "Man," said the ancients, "is the measure of the universe:" therefore, the less the man the less *his* universe, the greater the man the greater *his* universe. Judas will find his world is no larger than his

money bag, as sure as ever he makes it his business to live for that only. To Paul, life grows in worth every day. His universe expands unceasingly, and his opportunities of enrichment become so numerous and tempting here, and hereafter that he does not know what to prefer ; this or that ; he is poised between two worlds, in a strait betwixt two. Live only in your lower and sensual self, and you will soon be tired of life, beyond remedy. Live a life of eager thought, vigorous enquiry, a life of the reason and the intellect ; and you multiply your worlds indefinitely and carry the keys of the Temples of nature and history and science in your hand. Add to this a life of the Spirit, of the affections, of service and of faith, and all thing are yours, things present and things to come ; and no casual access of weakness, or of momentary alarm will take from living its perennial sweetness, divine nobleness and enduring worth. " It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."

II. But observe, further, tiredness of life may not only be no more, than a fleeting paralysis of the higher faculties of judgment or self-control, faith and hope ; but it may only mean exhaustion after, and by, a signal and victorious output of force. Elijah's bitter lament is a note in the minor key reminding us of Carmel. The prophet's gloomy forebodings at Beersheba are nature's protest against the enormous strain he has recently undergone in his gigantic and single-handed battle with Baal's priests for God and Israel.

That day's work at the eastern end of the precipitous ridge of Carmel was no common task. Alone, he challenged the 850 priests of Baal and Ashtaroth ; arranged, with a noble scorn of everything in his own favour, the terms of the national religious contest ; calmly watched with a startling

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### *A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 37*

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hazard of venturesome faith the worshippers of the fire-god through their prolonged performances from morning till noon; mocked and goaded them with withering sarcasm as he saw the failure of their vain repetitions, of their deeds of self-torture, and raving mania,—and then, calmly started to repair the broken altars of Jehovah, laid the sacrifice and the wood ready, soaked it with water till the trench was full; and finally sent up his whole soul to God in one sublime, simple and throbbing prayer for His attesting fire. It came. The water was dried up, the sacrifice was consumed, and the stones of the altar burnt. The people saw it and gave forth a victorious shout that rung through the sky, “THE LORD HE IS GOD! THE LORD HE IS GOD!” But truth needs protection. Purity of worship, requires a stronger vindication than this. The God of Hebraism is a jealous God. Idolatry hurts man, His child, and therefore, according to the Mosaic law, the abettors and feeders of idolatry are traitors to their country, as well as false teachers, and must be put to death. So the severe contest ends in the terrible slaughter of the 850 priests; Baal-worship is stunned, and goes reeling for the rest of its days from the blow.

And now came the terrible recoil. The excitement is over. The applause of the conquering people is hushed; and the prophet is tired, ay, tired out; tired in nerve and in heart, and a fit victim for all the fell spirits of despondency. In this moment, Jezebel, stung by her defeat, roused to anger by the death of her favourite priests, proceeded to threaten swift vengeance on the author of so disastrous a stroke to her policy and her religion. To the wearied and exhausted prophet her voice sounds like the crack of doom. Yesterday's struggle is blotted out of sight. Last night's victory is forgotten. A death-like langour sways the jaded nature of the



man, who but a few hours ago was one fierce flame of passionate courage and devotion. "It is enough," he says, "and more than enough. All I have done goes for nothing. I might as well have stayed at Cherith. The world gets no better. Wicked Jezebels have it all their own way; I will fly, for I am utterly weary of my life."

Man is finite in resource. He is weak and his powers soon run out. His body is worn down in a brief space and refuses to do the bidding of the will. Christ Jesus Himself, being wearied in His journey, sat down, and asked for a refreshing draught from Jacob's well; and His quick and sympathetic eye detected the need of His over-worked disciples, and said: "Come ye into a desert place and *rest* awhile." Cease working and get repose. Give over talking and listen. "Rest" is as divine a command as "Work." "Sit still" is as surely a direction of our Leader as "Arise, let us go hence." Good work cannot be done on a large scale without tiredness; and the better we work the more the exhaustion: and the deeper the drain, the more urgent the need for refreshing and quickening *quiet*.

Let us remember this, my brethren, when we are tempted to write bitter things against ourselves, as we find our knees tottering and our hands hanging down. Our pain and weariness to-day are the witnesses to the fervour and strain and enthusiasm of yesterday; an encomium and not a censure; a "well done" and not a rebuke. Thank God for Carmel; and acknowledging the limitations of human life, look on the loss of freshness and zest as his summons to tranquilizing, force-renewing rest; and regard even disease and pain, as His alarm bell, rung to urge you to find the healing influences of a period of repose. Praise God in rest, and by rest. Hush all repinings, assured that the Lord will not

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### *A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 39*

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forsake the work of His hands, but will perfect that which concerneth you.

III. This thought should be carried a little further. Tiredness of living, irritation against the conditions of our lot, and bitter and weak laments, may only illustrate the simple law, that weariness is most acutely felt in those faculties which have been most continuously and intensely worked, and with respect to those departments of emotion and service which have been most absorbing. It is in courage, Elijah has so grandly excelled, it is precisely in that quality he now fails. But yesterday, he dared every antagonist; to-day fear enervates him, and despondency travels through every avenue of his being and lays her leaden sceptre on and over all. As against his clear convictions, his sense of duty, he treated his life as not worth a thought, now he flies from Jezebel to the wilderness of the wanderings, to save it and is in abject dread lest it should be taken. Single-handed, he waged the war with idolatry, as if he beheld unseen hosts backing his endeavours, and leagued on his side; now his alarm is for his loneliness and he bewails that he has to do his work without comrades, and that "he only is left" to war on behalf of the true God of Israel.

The order of events is startling. But ought it to be so? The sequence is unexpected. But whose fault is that? We look aghast as we contrast the hero of the mountain with the coward of the desert. But does that prove wisdom or ignorance in us? We are puzzled to see these two hours, one of greatest exaltation, and the other of deepest depression, following one another! But who makes the puzzle?

Was it not exactly thus with Him whose experience unfolds and illustrates the story of all our lives? "*There*

*came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And IMMEDIATELY the spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty-days, tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.*" What a "startling order of events!" The baptism fulfilling all righteousness only just concluded, and the temptation begins. God, and then Satan. The voice from heaven dies away into the subtleties of hell. The attesting witness of the Father to His Son is followed by the solicitations of the Evil One. The rapturous and soul-gladdening moments of consecration to the redemptive mission, lead on to the awful challenge of the powers of darkness and the fierce conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. Even Christ purchases no exemption from tempting doubts and despairs, by the daring of His devotion and the fulness of His joy.

And, "The disciple shall be as his master." Listen to the colloquy between the Leader and His chosen souls at Caesarea Philippi. Note the lofty grandeur, the heroic faith of Peter's confession. Weigh well the significance of the Saviour's benediction; its compass and its width. "*Blessed art thou Simon Barjona . . . thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.*" But do not forget that in the very next talk Christ vehemently says to this specially honoured and foremost man: "*Get thee behind me Satan!*" One day a confessor, the next a tempter!

Again, was it not "on the next day" after the Transfiguration that Christ Jesus said to his disciples; "O foolish generation how long shall I be with you; how long shall I suffer you?"

Friends, let us try to think *humanly* of our spiritual life, of its conditions and sequences; and not add to our sorrows,

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## A BRAVE PROPHET TIRED OF LIFE. 41

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and risk our peace and strength, by misjudging our moods and misreading the facts and laws of our life. Man is undeniably, a unity so thorough that fibres of living sympathy run through his entire being, and no injury can be inflicted on any particle or portion without communicating a shock to the entire nature ; but yet we all know that man is also a complex host of faculties and functions, emotions and activities, and sustains separate and different parts under the sway of the central directing spirit. A mathematician may tire himself out with Euclid, and similar studies, and conclude that he can do no more, and enjoy no more ; and yet he may turn to a piano and find rest and delight. A literary man will drop his pen and declare he cannot think another thought, keenly and brightly ; and so sink into despondency about the decay of his powers and the failure of his genius. Let him go forth and botanize, or geologize in the fields and he will recover his physical tone, drive off melancholy and gain knowledge ; or as Robert Raikes said, let him get to some work amongst the needy young, and "botanize in human nature," and he will secure certain and large returns. In like manner we may exhaust our courage drain our meekness, sap our joys, and under the influence of the ebb of the tides of feeling and force, weakly complain, that our hands are tied, our difficulties are insurmountable, our life is a failure. Let us rather intelligently admit the limitations of our powers, boldly face all that admission involves, calmly resist the temptations to despondency and repining, springing out of our exhausting activities, and seek to ward off fits of impatience by *variety* in work, by widening the range and increasing the spheres of our exertion, and so secure rest to the tired and overstrained portions of our nature by the exercise of other and different faculties.

If we cannot sing with David and Hannah, we may sew with Dorcas, or go with Isaac into the fields to meditate at eventide. If we are too tired to join Paul in his contest with beasts at Ephesus, we can sit in our hired house, and talk of the things concerning the kingdom to all who come unto us. If preaching on Mars' Hill is beyond us, we can lay hold of the runaway slave Onesimus, and baptize him into the spirit of penitence and honesty by our love. If we are afraid of Jezebel, we need not moan about dying. That is not the only alternative. A hundred things are within reach, and anything is more manly; and wiser, and better than a grumble.

IV. "For like as a Father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them" that serve Him and work for Him. He knows their frame. He remembers when they are tired, and renews their strength, so that they run without being weary and walk without fainting. He is a Physician who never mistakes His patient: whose method is always kind and loving, and whose medicine is always appropriate and effective.

I can only mention, in the briefest way, the stages and elements of the Divine cure for the dejection that springs from tiredness of life.

(1) "He gives his beloved," Elijah, "sleep." As a fond mother interprets the petulant cry of her child as a supplication for the quieting and restorative energy of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," so God ministers first and foremost to the physical needs of the prophet, and *through these* to the deeper needs of the soul. Disordered health, over-strung nerves, insufficient rest are at the root of nine-tenths of our melancholy. We derange the harmony of our bodies, drain our nerves in business or at our professions,

and then wonder we are not fresh in devotion, keen in spiritual work, eager in spiritual desire, and responsive to the touch of God. Friends, we need sleep. Have you not observed what a tremendous revolution a man's world undergoes in a night? As the day closes, all is against us, Joseph is not, Simeon is not, Benjamin is going. Ruin is coming in upon us from all points of the compass, and collapse is inevitable. It is enough, we are tired of life. Bye and bye we go to sleep, and rise baptized in conquering energy, dread no collapse, dare all that threatens us, declare that Benjamin shall not go, and doubt not that we shall yet embrace Joseph and Simeon. Re-enforced by sleep we grip our sword anew, and shout in our loudest tones "*I Athanasius, against the world!*"

(2.) Still further, the patient and tender physician, ministers to the jaded and exhausted body. Unseen ministries bring the Bedouin his desert food; and as he awakes, it is to find before him his baked cake and water, inviting him to eat and drink. God gives him his daily bread, before He flashes into his mind new conceptions of His power and work, and prepares him by the invisible ministry of angels to understand and accept the cheering truth, the prophet is soon to hear, that God's victories are more numerous than he knows, and his methods of action more manifold than he has recognized.

3. Sleep and food, are followed by the quickening and faith-refreshing agency of the grand and stimulating memories of Moses and Horeb, the Mount of God. Meditating amongst scenes where Israel's lawgiver had been sustained in his long patience, and comforted in his quiet waiting upon God, the wearied and desponding prophet would renew his strength, forget his fears, and acquire new zeal. The past

life of our fellows is an infinite fund for the enriching of our life to-day. It increases the worth of living incredibly, and "reminds us we may make our lives" strong and wise, holy and "sublime." The God of strong consolations is the God of history, and some of his most healing medicines for souls, are compounded of the sufferings and patience, heroism and triumphs of departed saints.

(4.) But the spell of this historic region over the prophet is broken by a voice, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah." Meditation is not the end of life, but service; and new service must be preceded by a correcting and cheering revelation of the fact that spiritual successes are won not only or mainly by miraculous and murderous deeds like those of Carmel; by terrifying and destructive monsoons; rock-splitting, cedar-rending earthquakes; and flaming fires, but by the gentle, tender, penetrating forces of human persuasiveness and sympathy. There was a wind, but God was not in that; an earthquake followed, but no God; a fire, the very force that forty days ago attested his presence and help, but to-day He is not in that; no! He is in the still, small voice, with its quivering sympathy and its soothing calm. "God fulfils Himself in many ways; lest one good custom should corrupt the world." Avenging bloodshed is an exceptional method of advancing the divine rule; mostly that kingdom comes without observation, and consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

(5.) A second correction follows upon and completes the first. God next assures him that he is not so lonely as he thinks. There are seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Believe in unseen goodness. Every violet that grows is not seen. The lilies hide their beauty. "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and wastes its sweetness on

the desert air." Don't let us measure the Church of God by our statistics. The most far-seeing prophet of God has not all the names of his comrades on his register. I exult in the assurance, an assurance often confirmed in unexpected ways, that there is more faith in God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, more practical Christianity in the world than our much-bewailing Elijahs are ready to admit. Where they have one in their lists, God has His "seven thousand."

(6.) Finally, God reveals to His servant the *continuity* of His work, as well as its hiddenness and its spirituality, and at once sets him to the triple task of anointing Hazael to be king of Syria instead of Benhadad ; Jehu to be king of Israel instead of Ahab, and Elisha to succeed himself in the office of prophet. Thus in finding him new work he *perfects* Elijah's deliverance from fear and despair, and instead of suffering his career to close with a miserable *fiasco*, he prepares him for fresh enterprises, better work, larger joys, and a final ascent to heaven in a chariot of fire. Verily, the Lord did perfect that which concerned him.

Sydney Smith says "take short views of life." If you do, you cannot take *true* ones. It is no more fair to pass your verdict on the worth of Elijah's life from his wanderings in the desert of Horeb ; than to judge of the spirit of a man by his actions under a palpitating and agonizing toothache. There are scenes on earth, so diabolically wicked, or so insufferably sad, that if we restricted our vision to them we should despair. But

"These things must not be thought on  
After these ways ; so, it will make us mad."

No ! take *whole* views, see all you can and see wisely ; and remember that for tired and weary men life has still priceless



values and unspeakable prizes; and God, appropriate and strong consolations. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in His Son Jesus Christ, and believe in the real worth of a life that is inspired by faith and love, and consecrated to the service of God and men.



## **No. 4.—The Verdict of Solomon.**

**"Vanity of Vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Eccles. i. 2.**

THESE words are extremely familiar. And yet we are a little surprised, to find them at the head and front of a book, whose principal object, (seeing it is a part of our Bible), ought to be, to cure doubt, lift care, multiply joy, brighten life, and "thoroughly furnish men unto all good works."

Stranger still is it that, text and book alike, with their blank and offensive scepticism, express either the deliberate and fixed judgment of one of the most famous Kings (or else of some one living at a later date, and representing him); a king as great in Jerusalem as Augustus in Rome, Alexander in Greece, Cromwell in England, or the first Napoleon in France; and who had an unusually wide and many-sided experience, and so played his part in life, that rightly or wrongly, he has come down to posterity as a marvel of royal wisdom and a prodigy of intellectual cleverness.

Nor is it less astonishing that this indiscriminate, wholesale, and envenomed indictment of life and all its elements;

its loves and duties, its hopes and its God, recurs through the preacher's weird and woeful sermon with the terrible repetition and wild vehemence of fated and fateful storms in the Bay of Biscay, or the shocks of pain from the battery of an acute and incurable disease. Not by chance or hap-hazard; not as a momentary spasm of disappointed ambition; not as a wail over broken plans and shattered ideals, does Solomon's verdict take the foremost place in his book. It is there by design; is supported by all the evidence he can find; and is wrought into the very structure of his work, so as to put beyond doubt, the fixed and final estimate of human existence, formed by the experienced and aged Hebrew king.

The Jews forbade the study of this book to those under thirty years of age; and no wonder. Looking at its denials and despairs, incessant moans and mischievous half-truths, one may be excused asking whether it is worth while, listening to any preacher like this, and specially to one who is so hopelessly disconsolate. What good can it do? Will it make a miserable man less miserable, to be told by a crowned sovereign, that he has found existence a ceaseless irritation; gone through it and around it, and over it; looked at it from above and from below; from the centre to the circumference; traversed it from north to south, and from east to west; and found nothing worth having; and is forced to preach that human life, in its widest variety and richest diversity, is only a cup of Tantalus, held close enough to the lips to vex you with its fine, appetising aroma, but never close enough to allow you to drink! If life is so irredeemably bad as all that, we had better cease talking and preaching about it, and let it have its way, whilst we give ourselves to what pleasures we can find, altogether heedless of the morrow.

What's the good of such a preacher, or such a sermon, or such a text! In the career of *Moses* we may see how a man may undergo a dreaded reverse of fortune, and yet win life's truest satisfactions, its most rewarding prize. Even the cry of despairing *Elijah*, under the juniper tree, will warn us against taking "short views" of men and of life; but where is the advantage of weighing the opinions of a man whose verdict flatly contradicts experience by its idiotic exaggeration, and, tells us nothing better than that the whole system of life is an elaborately organized deception; a complicated and extensive machinery of illusion, or a gigantic "Will-o'-the-wisp"?

Well, perhaps, we may get this good. The "case" of Solomon differs from those of *Moses* and *Elijah*, in many ways; mainly in this, that the latter present to us *particular cases* in experience, that of the Preacher, who is King in Jerusalem, covers the *whole area of life, on its earthward side*. It omits nothing. Every condition we can covet, in order to obtain gratification, enjoyment or happiness is there. The *experiment* of obtaining pleasure from the material, the sensual, industrial, artistic, philosophic and the cultured, *apart from God*, is conducted with the best apparatus, with the most pains-taking thoroughness, and without a single flaw. All that is judged conducive to the balance of pleasures over pains is present, so that it is difficult even to imagine any new conditions. The "case" is an extreme one: and it is of real service in the following way. Suppose, for example, there are ten English roads labelled "from London to York," and one of the ten certainly leads thither. Nine of them are duly tried, and tried in vain. London is left nine times, and nine times over York is reported unfound, and the pilgrim returning for the last time declares, with no

little anger; this is the conclusion of the whole matter, "Take the tenth and only remaining road, go straight on, and you will be sure to be right." There are ten ways in human life labelled, "from the City of Unrest to that of satisfaction and happiness." The kingly pilgrim tests nine of them; and tests them with none but a vexing result. Nine different times, in nine different directions he starts, and nine different times he comes back again, regretting his wasted toil, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Nay! one course is left: take that, take it early, keep to it thoroughly and to the end: for this is the *whole* of man's duty and of man's happiness; "Fear God, and keep His Commandments."

Therefore, we may expect the verdict of Solomon to render us real service. It shows us what *not* to do: warns us off those methods of living which sap its strength, add to its burdens, corrupt its loves, mar its beauty, blast its hopes, and destroy its worth. And in a life so short and so busy as ours is, and where we have to begin with so scant a stock of personal experience, it is an untold good to be made *perfectly sure what we ought NOT to do, and at what point, and in what way, we ought to BEGIN our search for Life's Best Prize.* So that he is far from a useless man, who, though he mistakenly declares that "Life is not worth living," yet, demonstrates to us, in what particular ways life may be so lived, as to be worse than worthless: and if his verdict cover all the facts and embrace every wrong path, then we are driven to the gate of that "narrow way which leadeth unto life eternal," and urged to strive to "enter therein."

In this mood of expectancy let us consider

I. THE PREACHER.

II. THE PREACHER'S VERDICT.

III. THE PREACHER'S MISTAKE.

I. Who then is this PREACHER? and what are his exceptional qualifications for giving a final, decided and crushing judgment on the possibility of attaining happiness, without faith in God, and in His infinite love and righteousness. *Who* is he? A man without a peer! A king without an equal, in genius and position, in resources and leisure, in power and opportunity! A judge of unexampled shrewdness, and of unimpeachable ability and culture! If a ragged pauper pours contempt on wealth, you instantly recall the fable of the "Fox and the grapes"; credit the speaker with designs on your purse, and close your ears. If a man steeped to the eyes in luxury speaks harshly of the poor, you say, he *cannot* know anything about them or their lot; and forthwith you pay no heed to his judgment. If Judas sneers at the penitent and loving Mary breaking her box of precious ointment for the sake of Jesus Christ; you find the traitor has his eye on "the bag and what is put therein"; and therefore you hold him wholly disqualified to breathe a word concerning the beautiful devotion of the redeemed soul pouring out her heart's love at the feet of the grateful and gracious Saviour. But not the faintest shadow of disqualification attaches to him, who essays the gigantic task of solving the problem of human happiness. He is uniquely, not to say magnificently fitted to make this tremendous experiment; as much so as if he had been created and placed in Jerusalem for that express purpose. He was born just in the nick of time; and the circumstances of his birth were so palpably auspicious that his name registered the world-wide sway of "Peace" characteristic of the passing hour. And although the home of his youth was stained by unhallowed passions, rent by fierce contentions and shocked by tragedies; yet the influences of the saintly David and

the prophetic Nathan must have been of a most salutary kind. In his boyhood he was healthy and handsome, and soon became wise and brilliant, popular at home and famous abroad. His abilities were colossal and his industry prodigious. He amassed information till he became a library, and wrote songs till they reached a "thousand." "He spake of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes;" was a learned "man of science," an accomplished editor, a capable and original writer, a careful magistrate, and a sagacious political ruler. As for wealth and resource, of all kinds, he had everything heart could wish. He lacked nothing. His kingdom was in the high noon of its greatness. The sun of prosperity shone in his meridian glory. Not a cloud passed across his sky; not a want pained his vision. "He builded him houses and planted vineyards: had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines." His power was absolute and his wealth enormous; and for regal magnificence, voluptuous pomp, and worldly greatness, no one ever surpassed the Preacher who was king in Jerusalem. If the problem of human happiness ever was to be solved by merely earthly means, he was the man to do it. He had everything he could possibly need, except—! tremendous *exception!* except faith in God! If width of experience qualifies: he had it. If prolonged and painstaking study: it was there. If exhaustive variety of appliance: that too was present. Indeed whatever his verdict on life is, assuredly it cannot be given again by any one man from so broad, capable and luxurious an experience as his: and therefore, if it breaks down as a theory of Life's worthiest Prize in the hands of Solomon, nobody else need take it up. Where this Preacher confesses failure, success is positively,

and for ever hopeless. If he cannot get happiness by his methods, then by *those* methods happiness never will be got as long as men and women endure.

II. And now what is the VERDICT on the worth of life recorded and preached about, by this favoured mortal, this conspicuous child of fortune, this heir of all the ages and paragon of wisdom and greatness? What, says he in his old age to the question, "Is life worth living?"

He meets it with a decided, uncompromising and overwhelming negative. Life is unsatisfying, deceptive and worthless, from beginning to end. Every cistern you hew out of the durable rocks, is fissured and holds no refreshing water. Every goblet you put to your lips has poison in it. There is a serpent in every garden, and a worm in every rose bud. Go where you will and when you will, and stay as long as you will, it is the same, "all is vanity; there is no exception. All nature, all humanity, all labour, and all knowledge, all literature and all philosophy, all power and all pleasure, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. The desert is without an oasis, the whole horizon is without a light, existence is an annoying blunder, and being is a prolonged curse.

More doleful sermon on more dolorous text preacher never gave. Still, let us hear it out. He preaches with the courage of despair, a despair, fixed, rooted, invincible and unpausing, and with the energy of conviction. First, he says the gospel of *work*—of which we think so highly—is a vexing snare: "What profit hath a man of all his labour under the sun?" He has to go and leave it on the abiding earth; it does not enrich him, and it may be a mischief to those who come after him. Suns and seas, winds and waters, saints and sinners pursue their "everlasting circles," and find no rest. Yesterday's labour does not excuse from to-day's. Man is,



as a mill-horse, keeping his wearying and monotonous rounds, only that, unlike the horse, he feels acutely the ignominy of his position. Work is incessant, and work is worry. Building splendid palaces, designing beautiful gardens, labouring for knowledge, fame, and power, toiling and moiling, moiling and toiling—it's all of no use: "I have seen all the works which are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity, and vexation of spirit. This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith."

Nor is *wisdom* any more satisfying: I devoted myself to the career of the student, left the ways of men, and determined to find out the origin and meaning of the world: and in the vigorous exercise of the intellect, the keen pursuit of truth, the battles of logic, the investigation of nature and of life, I hoped to find the happiness that unceasing toil, gorgeous wealth, and voluptuous sensuality failed to supply, but I perceived that the pursuit of culture and wisdom also "is vexation of spirit, for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth in knowledge increaseth sorrow, for the wise man dies as the fool dies, and therefore I *hated* life," and succumbed as to inevitable and *fated* failure.

For it is the same all round. *Hope* itself is only a deceiver, and fate is lord of all. Fate brings us here, fetters us whilst we are here, and takes us away from life, when the clock of destiny strikes. We are his victims from first to last. There is a time for all things; a time to be born and a time to die; and all time is for us to be miserable in. The oppressed are without a comforter. The wise man is no better than a fool. Righteousness is no advantage. Swift men are left behind and sluggards reach the goal. Soldiers fight and are slain and on-lookers gather the spoil. Servants are in the saddle and princes walk till they are foot-sore. Every man has his price

and money answereth all things. You may perhaps find one real man in a thousand, if you look well, but not even one woman can you find in a thousand times that number of women. Human life is honey-combed through and through with deception, falseness, disease and death, and the only thing left for us, is to enjoy the present hour, treat the world as a fairly furnished restaurant, eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and that's the end of us.

That is the dolorous and ghastly verdict of the Preacher who was king in Jerusalem. There is the result of his elaborate experiment. He flung into life's crucible, all he *had*; and that was unspeakably more than his fellows ever had,—all he *was*; and that was by no means a despicable item; then he fed the fire with the fuel of his genius till it was white-hot and he kept it alight for many long years: and when the experiment was ended; he came and looked for the fine golden residue; and lo! there was nothing but a little black and worthless *ash*! That; and that only, is the vexing result of a self-seeking, self-indulged, self-idolizing life.

Oh; my brethren; would that Solomon's experiment had been sufficient to keep men from making the foolish attempt to find a better result with *less* means! But it has'nt—myriads of men have perversely imagined they could succeed where he failed; and find what he never could discover; and reap a different harvest from his, though they sowed the same sort of seed. And with what result? Hear the successors of Solomon preach from his old text! The *workers* come first, and a gifted statesman, Lord Dundas, when wished "a happy new year," answers, "Yes, it had need be happier than the last, for I never knew one happy day in it." A lawyer, Lord Eldon, at the summit of his

ambition, echoes Solomon's lament in the words: "A few weeks will send me to dear Encombe as a short resting place between vexation and the grave." But does not wealth fare better? Surely the millionaire has no anxiety or care, he is happy. "Me happy! what happy, when just as you are going to dine you have a letter placed in your hand saying: If you do not send me £500 I will blow your brains out."\* May not genius purchase exemption from this miserable doom? No, at Harrow yonder, was a student who had well nigh every gift God could bestow. He was the Solomon of the School, young and beautiful, rich and titled. A mighty genius with a splendid career dawning before him, and he

"Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump  
Of fame; drank early; deeply drank; drank draughts  
That common millions might have quenched—then died  
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

and long before he had reached manhood's prime, Byron bewailed his lot, saying

"My days are in the yellow leaf,  
The flowers, the fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone.

The fire that on my bosom preys,  
Is lone as some volcanic isle;  
No torch is lighted at its blaze  
A funeral pile."

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\* See these and other illustrations in Dr. Hamilton's *Royal Preacher*, p. 26.

But I will not add more. It is enough. Solomon's experiment has never issued in anything but a confirmation of Solomon's verdict; and it never, never can. Whoso then is wise, will understand these things, take them as proven, and proceed to some better and more promising method of discovering life's real Prize.

III. And it is fortunate for us that it does not require much labour, or any special gifts to find out the PREACHER'S MISTAKE. It is on the surface, and so obvious that the way-faring man, though a fool, may see it if he will. You may detect it even in the *literary* character of his sermon, as you hear the everlastingly recurring "I," "I." "I" is printed in six-inch capitals on every page, appears in every few sentences, and can only with great difficulty be kept down at all. There isn't a book like it anywhere for unblushing egotism. "*I* the preacher was king, *I* gave my heart to seek out all wisdom, *I* have seen, *I* am come to great estate, *I* made me great works, *I* was great." That prodigious "*I*" is the photograph of his prodigious selfishness: the blot of his book; the vice of his method; the cause of his misery; the source of his mistake. A diseased and bloated egotism is apparent all through his sermon, and is the sure witness to his huge and over-weening self-indulgence and self-idolatry.

And his selfishness was not always of a very exalted kind either; it was not the best part of the "*I*" that was supreme, but often the lowest and worst, for Solomon early gave the reins to his passions, and lived mainly a life of unbridled self-indulgence. Even when he prayed, it is significant that he asked for "*wisdom*" rather than "*holiness*;" for "*cleverness*" rather than character, for the "*wise and understanding heart*" and not like his father, for "*the clean heart*" and

"right spirit." He suffered his unequalled grandeur and prosperity to corrupt him, as so many before and since have done, and therefore there is no desire, to make love a solace, by keeping it pure and unstained, to exalt work by noble purpose, and to fill his heart with abounding hope by using his gifts for others ; but he makes himself the centre and goal of all his thought and desire, activity and ambition. In short as Ewald (I believe it is) suggests, his fatal error is laid bare in the expressive words HE FORGOT GOD. That was the cancerous seed in his nature, that spread through it and covered it, and then through the whole kingdom, until it destroyed both him and it. David never lost the true Mosaic feeling that he ruled not for himself, but for another ; and to the last the conviction wrought mightily within him, that Israel did not serve itself, did not even serve a law of truth and justice, but the God of Israel, who is Himself the True and Just. This faith was paramount in him. Never did it lose its ascendancy, and this was the source of his greatness and victories, and of the power and glory of the nation. Solomon may have started with that inspiring faith ; but if he did, he did not keep it long, he forgot God ; and remembered himself, " first, and last and midst and without end," became a glaring vanity himself, and then taking the measure of life and of the world from himself, foolishly and falsely affirmed that it was all vanity and vexation of spirit ; so that his wholesale censure of life is nothing else than a witness to his unspeakable folly and unbridled self-indulgence.

Let us then hear the conclusion of the whole matter. This book of Ecclesiastes is *not* an " inspired estimate of human life," it is a fool's estimate, and the estimate of one of the greatest of fools. It is the wail of a prodigal, who has left his father's house, taken all his goods and lived

riotously, and now bewails that his folly has banished him to the farm-yard and swine-trough. It is no declaration of the worthlessness of life ; *but of the worthlessness and folly of a particular way of living.* It is no condemnation of houses and gardens and pictures, and books, and fame and pleasure and power ; but of the *spirit* that has these things and handles them for none but miserly and selfish ends. It does not mean that there is no pure pleasure and satisfying joy in human loves ; no springs of satisfaction opened in daily work, no light in doing duty ; no bright hope for the future ; no loving and helping God ; but that a man did so love as to corrupt himself by it, and others too ; and convert, even home and social life, into a festering disease and a hurtful snare ; that he did work so selfishly that his toil degraded him where it might have purified him, and enslaved him, where it might have given him the power over himself ; and so, he becomes a demonstration of the truth of Pollock's words,

“ Attempt how vain,  
With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,  
With aught but moral excellence, truth and love  
To satisfy and fill the immortal soul !  
To marry immortality to death !  
And with the unsubstantial shade of time,  
To fill the embrace of all eternity.”

This then is our position. Solomon says, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit ; but a greater than Solomon utters the beatitude, “Blessed are the poor, blessed are the peace-makers, blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, and seek first the kingdom of God ; for they shall be filled.” The preacher who is king in Jerusalem cynically says, “Be not righteous over much : no good will

come of it." The king of all the ages directs us, to be perfect as God our Father is perfect; and we shall not lose our reward. The jaded and sated pleasure-seeker moaningly says, "Get what you can here; there is no knowledge, no wisdom, no device in the grave," the Guide and Comforter of men says, "Believe in God, believe in Me, believe in heaven, for in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you."

Guided by all that is true in the experience and words of the lesser Solomon, and resting with unhesitating confidence in the unerring counsels of the Lord Jesus, we are assured beyond all doubt that for us men, there is no deep satisfaction, no true joy, no abiding happiness apart from faith in, and fellowship with God our Father. We say then; *begin there: and begin now.* "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Don't repeat the follies of those who have gone before you; why should you? Don't attempt the impossible! Take the verdict of Solomon. Profit by the mistake he made and be warned against the waste of a solitary moment in using any other method of solving life's problem and winning life's prize, than that of hearty trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour, companion, helper, and friend. *To-night, begin with Christ. He is the only way to the Father; and the Father is the only supreme and sufficient satisfaction of souls.*

And, take care, in beginning with Christ that you seek the best things *first*: wisdom is good but purity is our first need; cleansing from guilt, a new heart, and a right spirit, our deepest want. Begin with "repentance" toward God as well as faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Set your soul in the path of holiness, and never turn to the right or to the left, as long as you live.

Beware too, of *slight* evils, of what are called "little sins." They, check the flow of bliss, and mar the character, injure your usefulness and hurt others. Solomon's ruin began in his forgetting God: and was increased by his leniency towards false religions and his alliances with "outlandish women." The goblet of human happiness is only filled after wonderful care; it may be upset by a single slight mistake.

And never forget, to hold all "things" as a trust from God, and as affording opportunities of doing good to others: and then everything you have will be an increase of satisfaction and joy: and instead of writing the mistaken verdict of Solomon at the end of your days; you will record, amid the approval of friends, the nobler, truer, and more joyous verdict of Paul. "*All things are ours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, ALL ARE OURS; AND WE ARE CHRIST'S, AND CHRIST IS GOD'S.*"





## No. 5.—The Sufferings of this Present Time.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His* purpose.”

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Romans viii. 18, 28, 35, 37-8-9.

A friend of mine, writing to me after reading the *first* sermon of this course, suggested that “life may be well enough worth living to men of joyous, sanguine and boisterous temperament, and whose careers have been busy, successful

and happy ; but that it is a far different thing to those who have been called upon to suffer"; and to suffer long and acutely, not from, and because of, their own faults ; but from, and because of, their virtues ; and who could easily have escaped their sufferings, by preferring falsehood to truth ; gain to godliness ; ease to duty ; and the seductive voice of Satan to the severe and authoritative mandate of God.

That suggestion raises a *real* difficulty ; brings us face to face with some of the most perplexing facts of our existence, and lays bare one of the causes of the wide-spread depression as to the worth of human life. There is no denying it. We have to suffer for being good : to endure pains and anguish because of the wickedness of others, and to pass through the "gates of tribulation" into any and every "kingdom of heaven." Suffering is here. It abounds. It is always unwelcome, often acute, and sometimes goes wracking and wrenching through our sensitive nerves, beyond all endurance. It is a fixed necessity ; a part of the very plan of our life, entering into it, as bone into the body, as "time" and space" into thought, or as a sense of "oughtness" into the very framework of the human conscience. We can no more (such is the undeniable fact) reach our best possible selves, and escape the ordeal of suffering, than we can see the most distant star without a telescope, or go round the globe without ever leaving the solid land.

1. The suffering is here : and therefore the question is, *Is life necessarily, and for that reason, any the less worth living? Do "the sufferings of this present time" subtract any real values from our human life?*

"Pity the man," says Voltaire, "who tries to say everything." I do not intend to deserve your pity on that score: but you will agree with me that I should neglect the most difficult part of my work, if I did not say something on such subjects, as *the sufferings of life; the meaning and mystery of pain; and the presence of evil*; and therefore I have chosen to study THE CAREER, CONDUCT, AND CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLE PAUL, believing that they contain the true, if not the complete answer to the enquiry above expressed; and that his conditions, history, and spirit, form, in all essential respects, a "test case;" at least, for all those "sufferings" which are incident to self-sacrificing devotion to the welfare of others, to the prosecution of noble ideals of life and duty, and to the victorious maintenance, against a sea of troubles, of an unselfish enthusiasm for humanity.

2. And I observe, first, that Paul, without any question, was an EXCEPTIONAL SUFFERER. He experienced what we call "life," that is "life" in its external conditions, at its very worst, at the extreme of want and wretchedness, pain and misery; indeed it was so bad that he could say of it, that of all men, he and his comrades, were "the most miserable," if this were to be the end of existence; and the "sufferings of this present time" were not to be followed by an all-rewarding "glory."

But human suffering is, as my friend suggests, a question of temperament, and previous experience, of education and general capacity. Some natures are so callous that an earthquake would scarcely disturb them, others are as sensitive to pain as the gold leaf to the slightest movement of

the electrical current. There are those who carry such stupendous force of purpose into all their work, that they render themselves nearly oblivious of shocks of agony that stun ordinary mortals for days. Men differ in many things, and in nothing more than in their capacity for suffering. Hence the variety of human experience is infinite, and each case must be carefully weighed in the balances, before any verdict can be safely given.

Now, Paul had a singularly favourable start in life followed by tremendous reverses, a wide and varied culture and a unique susceptibility to pain. He was the Moses and Elijah of the New Testament Church; and assuredly a greater king in God's spiritual Israel than the far-famed Solomon in Jerusalem. No one exercised a greater sway over the New Israel of God than he did. He was, next to Christ, its prime legislator, its chief bishop, its kingliest leader, and its most formative mind. He founded its churches, trained its pastors, formulated its doctrines, and inspired its flaming activity. Like his great prototype, when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Judaism; choosing rather to suffer rejection and persecution with the followers of Christ, than to enjoy the rewards of long training, sedulous industry, and devoted zeal; esteeming the reproach of the Nazarene greater riches than all the treasures of the Pharisees; for he had "respect unto the recompense of the reward."

In Paul, too, the spirit and power of Elijah re-appeared. Did the prophet dare Ahab and Jezebel and their priests? So Paul defied Nero and his persecuting myrmidons. Was Elijah a man of like weakness, and subject to fits of despondency, with ourselves? So the apostle felt his isolation keenly, looked despairingly on the possibilities of life *here*,

and was touched with a feeling akin to the infirmities which so plenteously beset us. Paul at Athens, after the contest on Mars' Hill, repeats the story of Elijah at Beersheba after the Carmel victory.

But it is in the differences between Paul and Solomon that we have made apparent, most distinctly, the chances of painfulness and anguish to Paul. Solomon found the fountains of human happiness overflowing wherever he went. For Paul nearly every such fountain was dry. Solomon was a king. Paul was an artizan: and at least once, if not oftener, was an artizan in quest of work. Solomon was a preacher who always had an acquiescent audience. The discourses of Paul were met with raillery, and roused persecution. Solomon had no sufferings, except such as were self-originated; and his was a strong, buoyant, hopeful, well-nourished nature. Paul had to "endure a great fight of afflictions, and was made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions." In short, whilst the Preacher, who was king in Jerusalem, had **EVERYTHING** in himself and in his conditions, necessary for conducting the experiment of obtaining the largest amount of pleasure from the material and sensual, the industrial and artistic, the regal and the philosophic; from "life" in all its manifoldness and depth of resource: Paul was bereft of most of these things, and had in their place, a variety of sufferings most acute, continuous and even fierce for nearly a quarter of a century, and finally passed out of life by a cruel and ignominious death.

And, be it observed, this man passing through these painful experiences was no hard-natured pagan, rough, coarse, and incapable of feeling, built up of nerves of iron, and steeled against want and misery by a total ignorance of the

joys of plenty, the sweets of friendship, the delights of knowledge, or the inspirations of a great career. Nor is he a stolid Stoic, a philosophic Cato, or a soured Marius. His heart is as tender as a woman's, as sensitive to a slight as a timid child's, and he is as watchful for the kindly attentions of friends as a lover. His soul is a many-stringed harp, and it vibrates to every breeze that blows. His nature is profoundly sympathetic and quiveringly susceptible to the touch of grief. At Athens he is "alone," and his solitude afflicts him till his son Titus cheers him with his companionship.\* "What!" says he, as he beholds the streaming tears of sorrowing friends, "what mean ye to weep and break my heart. Cease your entreaties, I cannot endure it. I must go forward. Do not tempt me by your loving persuasions to forego my vocation."† Again, in a sublime mood of all-embracing sympathy he exclaims "Who is weak and I am not weak; who is offended, and I burn not;"‡ who is hurt, and I do not suffer?" as if he bore on his great heart the sorrows and cares of all the members of all the churches, and was eagerly filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the Church."§

Follow, my brethren, that super-sensitive spirit through the long course of its alternating sufferings. List to the din and uproar at Ephesus, where he fights with men who are like wild beasts in their fierce fury and lawless cruelty! Behold him at Philippi, beaten with many stripes, thrust into the inmost cell, his feet still fast in the stocks, when "the old beldame earth shakes" the prison to its foundations! Stand by and feel for him, and with him, whilst the cruel people stone him at Lystra, till life is nearly gone! See him on the tumultuous sea, clinging to a plank of the wrecked

\* I. Thess. iii. 1. † Acts xxi. 13, 14. ‡ II. Cor. xi. 29. § Col. i. 24.

vessel, near the rocks of Malta! Hear him tell the tale of his sufferings, to protect himself from the slanders cast upon him by his fellow-christians at Corinth. *"Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."*\* Oh, friends, when I behold that great heroic soul, passing through this fierce fight of afflictions, this scourging and stoning, hunger and thirst, nakedness and shipwreck, fire and sword, and all so rapidly following one another, that he is scarcely out of the clutch of one before he is in the embrace of another: I utterly shrink, from comparing it with our own prosperous conditions, multiplied alleviations, and crowding joys! What is the loss of money, or even of health, and of friends, and all our sufferings in comparison with the experiences pressed into that autobiographic catalogue. Verily, the apostle was, like his adorable Master, "a man of sorrows," and exceptionally acquainted with grief: and if he found the secret of making his sufferings *add* to, rather than subtract from, the value of living; then assuredly no human sufferer ever need despair. Where such a man as Paul conquered, the feeblest soldier in the same war may expect the victor's prize.

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\* II. Cor. xi. 23-28.

3. How, then, let us now ask, does Paul bear himself in the midst of these prodigious and exhausting sufferings? In what mood does he face, and pass through, these galling hardships, fierce persecutions, and terrible perils?

Does he fear their force, slink coward-like out of their painful sweep, and hide himself till their fury is spent? Not for a moment! With erect form, and firm step, and unblenched courage he goes forth to meet his enemy, nobly scorning to put into comparison, even for a second, "the sufferings of this present time, and the glory that awaits the sacramental hosts of God's elect." True! he felt the strain of trials; and felt it most poignantly. True! he was sometimes "in a strait betwixt two"! But what *two*? Between what points does the pendulum of desire oscillate? Never was it a question with him, whether he should go to a place of "dreamless rest," or stay and suffer and work here; but rather, whether he should yield to the captivating spell cast over his spirit, by the anticipation of endless bliss, and of close companionship with Christ; or should remain to deny himself, and to toil for the welfare of the world. He did not seek for death as an escape from pain! Never! "In this tabernacle he groaned, but not with yearning to be unclothed." "*I have learned!*" oh matchless wisdom, taught only in the school of Christ; "*I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content. I can do, and bear, all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" He is a wronged prisoner, but content; flung into a dungeon, but a song is at his heart and on his lip; doomed to a felon's death, but he bears himself like a throned king. "*In much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings . . . by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as*



*deceivers, and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*"\* He is a conqueror; and more than a conqueror. He met his sufferings with an undaunted heroism, bore them with a triumphant serenity, consecrated them by a magnificent endurance, and showed how much nobler and stronger is the spirit of glad self-sacrifice that can glorify them, than the cleverness that can escape them! Brave old man! We honour thee! We glorify the Christ who inspired thee with His conquering life! And as we see thee, standing at the goal, the wreath of honour on thy brow, and the triumph-word on thy lips "I have fought a good fight," we forthwith endorse thy estimate of "the sufferings of this present time," and covet earnestly to learn the secret of thine unbroken calm and gainful content!

This then is our case. Judging the sufferings of Paul *from this side, i.e.*, after he has endured them, we say unhesitatingly, they enabled him to enrich his life with its most imperishable properties, and to jewel it with its most brilliant diadems, forming the resistance against which his heroic proportions display themselves, the fierce temptations with which he so resolutely and victoriously battles. Just as Jesus said to his disciples *after* the resurrection; on this side of the agony, and when the peril was overpast and the cup of suffering drained,—that He *ought* to have suffered, before entering into His glory; and that the ways of God were always above the reach of complaint, so we, standing *on this side* of Paul's Gethsemane anguish and bitter cross, no longer hear his sob and cry, but the sweeter tones of his

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\* II. Cor. vi. 4, 5, 8-10.

acquiescent trust and holy exultation, and see that his "reckoning" of the comparative values of "present sufferings" and subsequent gains, is absolutely faultless; that all things did work together for his good; that he was victor, and more than victor, through the inspiring love of the Lord Jesus, and that nothing was able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so it has ever been. The martyrdoms of life are not its dark, but its bright spots, not its discredit, but its glory, not its wails of woe, but its songs of praise. We always "reckon that the sufferings of this present time" in *others*, *who have passed through them*, are not worthy to be compared for a moment with the divine fortitude, sublime daring, passionate ardours, flaming zeal, and triumphant martyrdoms they elicit. They make life worth living: positively add to its riches and glory, redeem it from petty and ignoble aims, crowd it with gigantic and epoch-making deeds, and surround it with a halo of undecaying beauty. "God makes His heroes out of broken lives." His most illustrious children have had the closest fellowship with Him in His sufferings for a lost world, His patient war against sin and wrong, and His loving forbearance towards the wayward and erring. Sufferers have been the most heroic workers, and the first and sweetest of singers: and through their tears they have had visions of God and duty that have gladdened them and illumined the world. The literature of sorrow contains the most memorable names, and the highest products of humanity. As in song there is no strain so soothing, and strengthening as the twenty-third Psalm; and in colloquy there is nothing that approximates the fourteenth of John; so in history, there are no names that are more highly esteemed amongst men than those of the martyrs and

confessors of Christ. We exult in them ; put up monuments to their memory, reiterate the story of their self-forgetfulness, give their names to our children, and so prove that "we count those happy who endure" for a noble cause and in a fine spirit of heroic self-suppression. Of Paul and Polycarp, of Ridley and Latimer, we never can hear enough : and amongst the most thrilling annals of womanly devotion, we place the record of the brave Scotch maiden, who, fastened to the stake, met the tide that was rising to take away her life with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Brothers ! let us hear the word of the Lord ! Let us take the *right side* for judging of the sufferings of this present time ; and dare to apply to our actual experiences, the standard we are so free to adopt for others. Before we bear our suffering, and as we go into it, it is grievous. We recoil from it. The Cross is too heavy for us to carry, and we ask for some Simon to take our load. The chalice is filled with bitterness, and we naturally pray that it may pass from us. Thus it is with us, *on this side* our Gethsemanes, and it is not strange we hesitate, and doubt, and shrink, and even seek for other paths than those which lead right into the heart of the Garden of Sorrow. But still, let us be true, and hopeful and courageous. We are not the first to track this jagged road. A great company has preceded us, and assured us that we need not be dismayed. And chiefly, the foot-prints of the Divine Sufferer, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, are all along this path ; and He assures us that on the *other side* all will be well ; there we shall feast on the ripened fruit of righteousness, and enjoy a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Fellow-pilgrims, our life is a mountain climb. Seen from the valley in the early morn, its difficulties are huge, and

their conquest painful. Toiling up the mountain side our muscle is tested and strained, and we are weary and faint; but at length we gain the crown of the mountain, and oh! the rapture of the far-extending, sun-lit scene; the rush of hilarious healthfulness, the bounding vigour, the sense of accumulated strength. Verily, we "reckon" that the sufferings of that ascent are not worthy to be compared with all the glory now revealed to our delighting and absorbing souls: we are more than conquerors: and nothing shall ever again make us doubt the wisdom of leaving the lowly vales in search of the summits of the everlasting hills.

" For all that we meet  
Shall work for our good ;  
The bitter is sweet  
The medicine food.  
Though painful at present  
'Twill cease before long,  
And then O ! how pleasant  
The conqueror's song ! "

4. Still, it can never be forgotten, that for these special and exceptional sufferings, we require special and exceptional aids. The worse a man's position, the more he has to suffer, the acuter his pains, the more he needs help: help from beyond himself; and thanks be to God, the more certain is it, that help will come to us men from Him who is the pitiful and loving Father of us all. The grown oak bears its front to all the winds that blow, but the tiny acorn that shelters a young and feeble life, comes sheathed and protected with the utmost care. To matured men, God says: "the world is thine, find thy place in it, fill it, and fill it

nobly, maintaining thy ground against all comers." The babe He wraps in a winning garment of innocence and weakness, and puts it into its mother's lap, saying, "Take this child, and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." Slight aid will suffice for the poor, when the sky is balmy and the sun warm: but in the piercing cold of winter the need of charity is larger, and the flow more copious. So the strain of living was great to Moses and to Elijah; but it was much heavier for Paul and his fellows,—yea, to them life was so bad, so insufferably bad in all its conditions, that we may safely aver, men never had more or deeper needs: and therefore, according to the divine law of help, never had there come to men such gloriously ample resources.

What were these resources?

No doubt, like Moses and Elijah, Paul believed in God and endured as seeing Him, who is invisible, and worked as one coming directly from His presence: but faith in God reached its maximum of intensity, power, and achievement in Paul. In Solomon the "*I*" was everything; in Paul the "*I*" is nothing, and Christ is all in all. *I* was crucified with Christ; nevertheless *I* live, yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which *I* now live in the flesh *I* live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. The invisible God of Moses is the personal, visible, and soul-filling Christ of Paul, the source of his integrity and enthusiasm, self-obliviousness and zeal, labour and hope. He lives, but not to himself, or by himself; but by Christ Jesus and for Him, and for humanity in Him; and therefore he glories in tribulation;—glories in it, does not resent it, and treat it as discrediting life; but positively takes a pride in it; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience

experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

Out of such convictions and hopes, it was no wonder so strange a fearlessness, so grand a daring, so reckless an encounter with suffering and death, were born. The life to come was as real to Paul as the life that now is, and heaven was more certainly his dwelling place than Rome, and the "glory" he expected would more inevitably follow his sufferings than to-morrow follow to-day, Paradise was no phantom of the imagination, it was the most positive of worlds, already peopled with the spirits of just men, and ringing with the applauding shouts of the myriads who watched on high, and waited with eager expectancy the victory of Christ below. Heaven was no beautiful mist generated by the desires, it was a citizen-community as actual as Corinth, and in which Paul already had a citizen's rights. Socrates had imagined that on the other side of the grave he would receive a welcome from the good. Paul was as sure of it as he was of the love-gifts of his friends at Philippi. Cicero dreamt of the continuity of life and friendship. Paul's conviction of personal immortality and blessedness was held with a strength we cannot understand, and used with an energy we cannot measure; but which, incontrovertibly, alone explains the gaiety of heart with which he fought the good fight of faith, the pertinacious faithfulness with which he finished his course, the deep calm with which he laid his head on the martyr-block, assured that the Lord the Righteous Judge waited to bestow upon him the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. Ask you, then, who taught Paul to reckon, that "present sufferings" are not worthy to be compared

with the future glory? The answer is, Christ! Who fired and fed his unquenchable zeal for human welfare? Christ! Who imparted to his career the sustained energy, the steadfast purpose, the persistent devotion, which are its glory? Christ. In whose school did he learn his unbroken content, his tremorless equanimity? Christ's. This is the word that explains Paul; and explains a life of suffering for the good of others. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Whoever wants to master Paul's arithmetic and repeat Paul's victories must go to Paul's teacher and leader, the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

5. Again, then, we say, the more a man seeks to be and to do for OTHERS, the more of God he will need, and must have: the higher and further he aims in the quality and durability of his work, the more certain will he be to suffer, and the deeper will be his need of faith in that gospel, which abolishes death, proclaims the perpetuity of pure goodness, and brings life and immortality to light. The man who lives for sense, who aims at no more than sated and contented feelings, the "drowsy quiescence of creatures that have only to eat and be filled" will have no serious need of God or of a long future. Like Dives, if he "fare sumptuously every day" and get his proper supply of "fine linen," that is enough. Living only for to-day, and for his sensual self, he has no need to distress himself about the evidences for an Eternal Morrow, filled with the awful glories of the Eternal God. But as soon as a man seeks to enter into the glory of perpetual usefulness, to abate the evils around him, uplift the fallen, enlighten the ignorant, and attain to personal truth and goodness, his soul will be filled with a noble unrest, till he takes hold of God in Christ, and has such a

faith and hope in the future as makes this life and that, into an unbroken and progressive whole. The fact is, the dimensions of the souls of men transcend the limits of our lot. We are greater than our sphere and conditions. Our desires stretch beyond ourselves. We yearn for a good we have not attained, crave more than earth can offer, pant for more than time can give, and work for more than our short lives will permit us to achieve. We are as surely the children of Eternity as we are the children of the Father, and as "we are made for God," as Augustine says, "and our souls are restless till they rest in Him ;" so are we made for Eternity and our souls are restless, except as they are swayed by a faith that over-leaps the bounds of death and freely ranges over the ever-widening areas of eternity.

And as we seek, more and more, to make our life rich and worthy, to fill out its days with unselfish service ; to advance the cause of the poor and needy ; to heal the wounded and heart-sore, to loosen the yoke of the oppressed, and to establish the kingdom of righteousness and peace, the more we shall have to suffer, and the more will the need of this simple, and far-reaching, and inspiring faith in Christ be borne in upon us. Let us have high aims, a right spirit, and a resolute purpose, and we shall wait for God more than they that watch for the morning, and shall not wait in vain. If I try to find iron filings scattered through a heap of sand with my hands I shall fail, for my fingers are not magnetic. If I use my eyes I shall fail ; but let me take even a very small magnet and sweep it through and through, and as it moves along it will gather to itself the smallest particles that are in affinity with it. So the spirit that is self-centred and self-seeking, that lives to get, and gets to keep ; that cares only for the things which are temporal, and not even for the



best of these, will sweep its sensual fingers through the facts of life, and gather nothing; may even peer into the phenomena of the mind and see no God, and no sign of futurity. It has no magnet! There is no pureness of aim, no loyalty to conscience, no care for manhood and man. But he who comes, like Paul, with the magnetism of a conscience void of offence: a readiness to follow the best light he can find; a great purpose and a great love, will, though he move through oceans of sand, attract to himself, a thousand sources of power in service, and of thankfulness in suffering. Life is best worth living, when we are set on being at our best, by faith in, and fellowship with the Infinite Best, revealed in Christ Jesus. This is the victory which over-cometh suffering, even our faith; and such a faith grows, by the grace of God, out of pure self-sacrificing purpose, and well-meant work for others. Let us then, seek to make our lives worth living, by heeding the rousing words of Professor Blackie:—

“ Onward, brave men, onward go  
Place is none for rest below;  
He who laggeth faint and fails,  
He who presses on prevails!

Monks may nurse their mouldy moods  
Caged in musty solitudes;  
Men beneath the breezy sky  
March to conquer or to die!

Work and live—this only charm  
Warms the blood and nerves the arm,  
As the stout pine stronger grows  
By each gusty blast that blows.

On high throne or lowly sod,  
Fellow-workers we with God :  
Then most like to Him when we  
March through toil to victory.

If there be who sob and sigh,  
Let them sleep or let them die ;  
While we live we strain and strive,  
Working most when most alive !

Where the fairest blossom grew,  
There the spade had most to do ;  
Hearts that bravely serve the Lord ;  
Like St. Paul, must wear the sword !


Onward, brothers, onward go !  
Face to face to find the foe !  
Words are weak, and wishing fails,  
But the well-aimed blow prevails ! ”



## **No. 6.—The Meaning & Mystery of Pain.**

I want, my friends, to speak to-night (in the measure in which it is possible) as though we were in full view of the forced, fixed, and inevitable pains and sufferings of human life; and with as keen and vital a sympathy with the sorrows of men, as if the acutest griefs were now cutting, like sharpest knives, our quivering flesh, or we were being stunned by the heaviest blows of disaster.

I do not want to persuade you that life is one whit better than it really is. I shrink, to an extent I cannot describe, from trying to find consolation in pleasant untruths, and comfort by wilful blindness: for I cannot believe God's world needs it, and if it did, it would be most unworthy of us to yield to any such demoralizing necessity. Therefore, I do not attempt, for a moment, to minimise the vast breadths of life filled by pains we cannot avoid, sufferings we must bear, misery it is impossible to cheat, and blows from which it is of no use flinching. It were as unwise as it is immoral to paint life in the rose colours of our wishes; as though there were no rending of loving hearts, no racking of the nerves, no incessant and intolerable agonies; no deep necessity existing in the very



frame of things for the moans of suffering and cries of anguish of the toiling millions of our fellows. We may stuff our ears with the cotton of falsehood, lest the wails of the woeful should break our "silken repose"; but though such a course may enable us to talk and read, work and live, as though earth were Paradise, yet it will not soothe one weary soul, nor heal one broken heart, nor soften one hard fact.

#### THE SAD STORY OF HUMAN PAIN.

Why! some of you have not known a day, for years, without its suffering! Toil and pain, pain and toil, have followed you all the days of your life. You started the race of existence heavily weighted, and you have never out-grown your difficulties. The bread of sorrows has been your daily food; the bitterness of wormwood and gall has taken the place of sweet affections. Dear children, tenderly loved, are no longer within sight and embrace, and you "sigh for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still." The heart is sorely bruised, the spirit droops, the frame is shrivelled, and you are ready to exclaim: "My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.....I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping; my days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass..... I am a man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath."

Others of you, as I well enough know, are suffering the pain of fatigued and exhausted energies. You have striven nobly and failed; won prizes for which you do not care, and missed others on which your whole heart was set. Your soul is strong in its aspirations and passionate enthusiasms,

but your "body" holds you down as with unbreakable chains. You soar sun-ward, but always to have your wings scorched, and to droop and drop defeated. The "flesh" is an insupportable weight, and you are fretful, dissatisfied, and almost tired of life, and ready to say:

"I could lie down like a tired child,  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,  
Till death, like sleep, might steal on me;  
And I might feel in the warm air  
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea  
Breathe o'er my dying brow its last monotony."

Others of you, again, experience the dull and heavy pains of an annoying indifference, as to life's highest duties, and most sublime privileges. You have been betrayed, deceived, and disappointed, have lost faith in men and women and in God, and fallen down on the bogs of an unsatisfying carelessness. "The weary weight of all this unintelligible world" is too much for you. The prosperity of the false is a perplexity, and you are so jaded with your useless labour, that you scarcely care what comes next: and if you say anything at all, it is in stolid despair that you cry: "*Who can show me any good: who will, if he can? Evil I know, vexation I know, pain I know, but real satisfying good is a tantalising dream, a vain and foolish wish.*"

So, life is like the gathering around the Pool of Bethesda. Many are waiting—diseased, sick, impotent, lame—for the moving of the waters. Some are impatient and eager, watching with wistful eye for the first bubble to rise. Others are too tired to look, and only open their eyes when they hear the splash of some more fortunate fellow-sufferer who has

seized his chance and made the most of it: whilst some have looked so long, and been cheated so often, and are so incapable of effort, that nothing short of the appearance and power of a Divine and Unexpected Physician will be likely to make them whole.

PAIN HARD TO BEAR, BUT OFTEN EXAGGERATED.

Now, observe, I do *not* say: it is an easy thing to wait eight and thirty years for the stirring of the waters that shall wash away our pains, make their meaning clear, and unfold their mystery. I know better. It is *easy* to say, that we *ought* to trust in God and be at peace: but it is not easy to do it, when all things are going against us, and Simeon is not, and Benjamin is not, and Fate is threatening to rob us of the last and sweetest consolation we have, No! our cares are real, our disappointed desires are many, and our pains are hard to bear: and we are discouraged, restless, and sad, tempted to evade cross-bearing, to prefer ease, by the cheapest and quickest means, rather than perfect restoration by a painful process: and, perhaps, are even urged to sigh for "the dreamless rest beyond the grave."

But you know, and I know, that we *may* exaggerate our pains, and come, even, to find a solace in "grumbling." Dissatisfaction may become a disease; and in our anguish we may say very much we do not mean. I have heard of a suffering, poverty-stricken man, who was carrying a load of sticks on his back. He became tired and sat down on a bank, and laying his sticks on the ground, he said, "I am sick and tired of this; I heartily wish Death would come and release me." Instantly, Death stepped up and said, "Here I am, what did you want of me?" "I wanted you to help me put this bundle of sticks on my back again," said

the astonished pilgrim. So, thousands of us express, in our thoughtless and inconsiderate moods, a wish for Death; and yet if Death were to come, we should be ready to bribe him with anything we have to leave us. It will not do, to measure human pains, by human lamentations; nor to take the wishes of men in suffering, as the real standard of the sharpness and weight of their afflictions.

#### PAINS THAT EXPLAIN THEMSELVES.

This, too, everyone will admit, that there is a large class of pains over which no veil of mystery is drawn, and whose meaning is as clear as the unclouded light of heaven. As Napoleon said of the French Republic in its palmy days, "It is as plain as the sun in mid-day; only the blind can fail to see it." So he who runs through life at the quickest pace, may read the significance of the pains of hunger, ignorance, and spiritual yearning; of sport, and exercise, learning and business; and a hundred similar conditions. They proclaim their own character, and carry on their front the attestation to the beneficence of their origin and issue. Nobody need expound them or defend them. We encounter them with hilarity, and endure the inconvenience they bring with a full assurance of faith in their divine uses. James Hinton, therefore declares, with undeniable truth: "a life from which everything that has in it the element of pain is banished, becomes a life not worth having; or worse, of intolerable tedium and disgust."\* What is the power that moves the gigantic and complicated machinery of labour all over the world, in factory and field, in store and on 'change, on sea and land? What! but the incessant and ever-goading pain of hunger! Whence comes the stimulus to

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\* *The Mystery of Pain*, p. 47.

explore the phenomena of nature, to dive to the depths of the sea, soar to the stars, roam over trackless deserts and go to the ends of the earth in quest of knowledge? Whence; but from the acute and intolerable pains of human ignorance! How get you the fullest and robustest health? By a perpetuity of inactivity, the eternal occupancy of the easy chair? No! By encountering the risks of cricket and rowing, and horse-riding; the inconveniences and irritations of mountain climbing, and the perils of manifold occupations which oxygenate and quicken the flow of blood through the veins!

And is not this too a verifiable fact? the healthier the body, and the more perfect the mind; the more are we prepared to welcome and endure the pains incident to the maintenance of our physical well-being, and to the increase of the stores of our information? It is weakness that shrinks from the long walk, and the brisk sport, and the tough climb. It is disease that cries out for unbroken rest. Strong and glowing health exults in difficulty, grapples with inconvenience; and finds a luxury in the toil that begets a fuller and a deeper life. Pain, therefore, has its root in the essential order and growth of our life; holds an undisputed place amongst the chief benefactors of the human race and is least of all a perplexity, to the man whose body is most healthy in muscle and nerve, and whose mind is most sound in its judgments. If there be any mystery in such pains as these it is because we are physically or mentally diseased.

#### PAIN AND LAW.

We may now go a step farther without any hesitation. Everywhere and always men have felt that pain is a just punishment for violated law. "Who hath sinned, this



man or his parents that he should be born blind?" is a question which tersely and conclusively expresses an ineradicable instinct of humanity; of the educated Jew, the philosophic Greek, the imperial Roman, and the rude barbarian. Literature teems with the doctrine. It is confined to no class, to no age, to no condition. The venomous beast has no sooner fastened itself to the hand of the Apostle, who has just narrowly missed shipwreck, than the untutored Maltese exclaim—"No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, justice suffereth not to live." Greek tragedies and Roman histories alike declare that suffering implies sin, and is a *sign of previous* wrongdoing; and the instincts of men not only vindicate the doctrine, but also recognise the beneficence of the fact. For man not only has a conscience, but conscience holds man in its powerful grip, and forces him to connect penalty with wrongdoing, just as the intellect urges him to trace effects to their adequate causes.

And since the law is holy and just and good, and in keeping of it there is great reward, we confess, even when we suffer, not only the justice but also the benevolence of the divine statute which annexes disease to dissipation, want to waste, weakness to prodigality, exhaustion and weariness to exaggerated devotion to business; and suffering, and pain to wrongdoing. It is an unimpeachable law of the divine government: *deeds are seeds*: and "whatsoever a man soweth that also shall he reap; if he sows to the flesh he shall of the flesh reap corruption, and if he sows to the spirit, he shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." All pain then, which is simply the penalty following the violation of the laws of health and thought and morality, is a witness to the beautiful and benevolent order of our life, and a testimony

that God has so arranged the conditions of existence that even its penal sufferings are calculated to add to the real value of our being from day to day.

#### THE DARK PART OF THE CIRCLE OF PAIN.

Of the wide circle of human pain we have, then, marked off two large segments, which need only to be seen to be understood, and understood to be appreciated. They are bright with the soft light of a sweet reasonableness, and inspire us in the one case, with a feeling of thankfulness and joy, and in the other with patient resignation. But the remaining portion of the circle is dark indeed ; for it is crowded with the pains, which are *not due in any way to personal sin, nor necessary to physical health and mental growth.*

The tower of Siloam falls on saints. Pilate's sword pierces the good. Job is an upright man, fears God and hates evil, and yet suffers more than any man of his day.

" The best of men

That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

And He, the holy Jesus, told his disciples that "the blind man had not so sinned" as to cause his blindness ; and *yet he was blind* ; that his parents had not so sinned as to cause his blindness ; and *yet he was blind*. The bitterest ingredient in the cup of suffering we have to drink, is that put in by the hands of those who ought to have assuaged our sorrows, lifted our burdens and made our hearts glad. Our own children have wronged us, and yet we trained them well. Friends with whom we have walked to the house of God have deceived us, though we never gave them ought but

kindness. We bear a load of ill we never took up, and that no body can remove ; suffer pains no sin has caused, and no medicine will allay ; have to endure idleness and yet have an insatiable passion for honest work : we are racked with pain and yet would rather die a dozen times in martyr-fires than do a wrong act, or disobey our Heavenly Father. Is it a wonder that we groan and travail in such pains as these ?

#### ONE RAY OF LIGHT.

Suffering friends, let me remind you, first, of the strongly consoling fact that such pains as these, distressing and inevitable and inexplicable as they seem, have been bravely borne by men and women like ourselves, through the sustaining presence of the Lord Jesus Christ : and have issued in the enriching of life, and the increase of its nobleness and value for themselves and for others.

For example, I am frequently hearing of christians "laid aside" by sickness and disease who are, notwithstanding, springs of joy to the healthy, and fountains of perennial pleasure to the strong and vigorous. A friend said to me not long since, "The brightest face I know, belongs to one who is an hourly sufferer, who has not risen unaided from her bed for eleven years ; and yet is so pleasant a companion that her nephews and nieces would grieve over nothing so much as wounding her, and has such a beautiful unselfishness and eager consideration for others, that her life is like the course of a refreshing stream, or the bright and jubilant march of the strong and life-giving sun."

I do not cite this as rare. It is not. Such patient cheerfulness and holy serenity are natural to the paradise of grace. The heavenly Husbandman knows how to produce

clusters of rich and ripe grapes on the branches of the Living Vine.

MISS ARNOLD.

Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, writes of a saintly sister the following words: "Through disease she was confined to a crib for **TWENTY YEARS.**" Think of it, "twenty" long years; "and never once could she change her posture for all that time. And yet I never saw a more perfect instance of the spirit of power and love out of a sound mind. Intense love, almost to the annihilation of selfishness; a daily martyrdom for twenty years, during which she adhered to her early-formed resolution of never talking about herself: thoughtful about the very pins and ribbons of my wife's dress, about the making of a doll's cap for a child—but of herself, save as regarded her improving of all goodness, wholly thoughtless; enjoying everything lovely, graceful, beautiful, high-minded, whether in God's works or man's, with keenest relish; inheriting the earth to the very fulness of the promise; and preserved through the very valley of the shadow of death from all fear or impatience, or from every cloud of impaired reason which might mar the beauty of Christ's Spirit's glorious work. May God grant that I might come but within one hundred degrees of her place in glory!"

Such fruit as that only grows on God's trees, and after much careful, loving, and patient husbandry. It is not any chance garden that will yield a patience that is never ruffled, a serenity that is rarely clouded, a forgetfulness of self always bright and fresh, a solicitude for others deep and full and steady, notwithstanding paroxysms of pain, or years of enforced privation. No; it is only under the gracious and loving discipline of our Heavenly Father that such beautiful and divine strength is drawn out of such utter weakness.

But He can do it, if only we will welcome His presence, yield to His loving corrections, and rest in His sufficiency. Abiding in Christ, Christ abiding in us—there is the secret of *such* fruitfulness. The life is beautiful where the soul is beautiful ; only then, and there. It is the inner that makes the outer ; and if the inner be formed after, and filled by, Christ, a Christlike loveliness and grace will adorn the weakest and most afflicted with a beauty “ that never dwelt on earth or sea ”—the beauty of Christian character, the beautifullest sight for us this side of heaven. It is a truth the sons and daughters of sorrow should never forget ; long afflictions, cruel disappointments, broken plans, have been the background of some of the most lovely pictures of heroic patience and conquering faith. The sick room has been a sanctuary radiant with the presence of God ; and uncomplaining sufferers have preached sermons on the Divine Love surpassing all ever heard from the pulpits of cathedral and chapel.

And not only so, but personal, inevitable, and inexplicable pain has been one of the mainsprings of moral greatness ; the stimulus to abounding sympathy and activity for *others* ; the consecrating oil to careers of devotion, nobleness and unselfishness. Some men never would have found themselves, and their vocations, had they not been afflicted.

#### THE CHILI PALM.

In the gardens at Kew there is a specimen of a tree which in its own country attains the height of from forty to sixty feet, and bears numerous small, edible, thick-shelled nuts, and yields, after it is felled, a syrup called palm honey. This honey, according to Darwin, is a sort of treacle, and forms really the sap of the tree. A good tree will yield

ninety gallons, notwithstanding it looks dry and empty as a drum. The tree is felled, the crown of leaves lopped off, and for months the vessels of the tree pour forth their stores, and every fresh slice shaved off exposes a fresh surface, and yields a fresh supply. So have we seen Christian men, seemingly hard and unsympathetic, standing in their uprightness, commanding not a little respect, but rarely winning love, till felled by an adverse blow, and cut again and again by sharp and incisive sorrows, and then they have yielded sympathy, and love, and helpfulness, in measureless amounts. Every Christian nature has in it the well-filled vessels of divine sympathy, but in some the vessels are never opened except by the sharp axe of trouble.

Think you, would Ignatius Loyola have been the chivalrous missionary he was if he had not passed through the fierce fires of personal suffering? Was not John Newton led by affliction to the Saviour? Did not John Bright begin his philanthropic career at the grave of his wife? Listen to the key-note of his public life,—a note of sympathy with human suffering ringing loud and clear in all his speeches; but most distinctly heard in his speech at the inauguration of the Cobden memorial; when he said, referring to the commencement of his public life:—"At that time I was at Leamington, and I was then, on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, in words of

condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted his invitation \* \* \* Since then, though there has been suffering, and much suffering in many homes in England, yet no wife, and no mother, and no little child has starved to death as the result of a famine made by law."

This then is manifest. Just as Paul's sufferings, which he might have avoided, but did not, wrought out for him an eternal weight of glory: so sufferings *which could not have been avoided*, and which were in no way due to personal wrong-doing, have been meekly borne and grandly used by Christian men, and have resulted in immense additions to the wealth of the individual and collective life of men. Let us then be of good cheer. Christ will not fail us. The gold will come out of the quartz when it is put into the mill; the dross will be separated from the silver by the aid of the Refiner's fire.

#### A SECOND GLEAM OF LIGHT.

But there is yet more light to break forth on this dark part of the circle of human pain. "This man is blind," said Jesus, "not because his parents sinned, nor yet because he himself sinned; but that the works of God may be made manifest in him"; and he, become a conspicuous example of the way in which the Father of us all opens the gate of glory over against every path of suffering, and makes even the closed physical eye a means of flooding the spiritual nature with the beauties of the eternal Christ. There is not

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one of these dark sufferings that has not something specially given by God to assuage it, and consecrate it, and to convert it into a means of increasing the worth of life.

Capability of suffering is itself a sign of high rank in the animal world, and always means corresponding capability of joy. Romanes proved that pain bears a direct relation to the amount and quality of the intellectual faculties. Jelly fish, he says, know nothing of pain; and may be cut and pierced and frozen, and yet not suffer. On the contrary, man's special endowments make him susceptible of the acutest suffering, and *therefore* of the richest and fullest consolation. Does the whole human creation groan and travail together in pain? Then for it is reserved the unspeakable dignity of the manifestation of the sons of God. Do our intelligence and conscience and free-will make moral evil a fearful possibility? So they make possible the glorious experiences of repentance and faith, of regeneration and renewal by the Spirit of God. Are our hearts bruised by the separating stroke of death? Then to us is given the entrancing visions of re-union in the many mansions of our Father. May we have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, be made conformable to His death, and bear pains we have not ourselves caused? Then also shall it be given to us to reign with Him for ever. So "the powers that deepen terribly the sense of ill, exalt gloriously the faith in good; they cast us into the midst of sorrow, but they throw us into the embrace of God."

Let us, again, then be of good cheer, and

"Fresh courage take.

The clouds we so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on our head."



"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face."

Let us cast out fear by faith, despair by hope, and never doubt that Christ will find some way of soothing our pain; His pierced hand sustain our aching head, and His balm heal our broken heart. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and His presence is that of all-sufficient grace and all-sufficient solace, and all-sufficient worth. We do not know the extent of His resources; but we may be assured that "He sets one thing over against another," and therefore we may even now "glory in tribulation," and anticipate that His "strength shall be made perfect in our weakness," and our infirmities and pains become the occasions of the fuller displays of His grace.

#### THE LIGHT FROM THE CROSS.

Some time ago, one of you gave me a little book on Pain, by James Hinton, from which I have already quoted. It is a most consolatory and suggestive essay, its chief excellence being that it floods the dark portion of the circle of human suffering with light from Calvary; and teaches that all pain is remedial in its purpose; that we are made for pain because we are made for love, even the love of others, shown in a self-sacrifice like that of Christ; that nothing is more divine and God-like than entering joyously upon this ministry, and bearing pain for the sake of others, that they, through our poverty and suffering, may be made rich and glad; and finally, that if we were as we ought to be, really redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, and thoroughly

renewed by His Spirit, so as to be partakers of the Divine nature in its fulness, we should find our joy in self-sacrifice, our bliss in blessing others. He says: "The predominance of sacrifice is a sign and proof upon how good a plan the world was formed, upon how high a type of bliss. Our feeling it as pain, proves something wanting in ourselves."

I can no more doubt the truth of this doctrine, than I can fully describe its immense consolations. I have the profoundest conviction that the pains and sufferings of men are not malign forces thrust into the universe by a direful power, vindictively and irresistibly working for the hurt of men. There is penalty I know, awful, stupendous penalty for violated law. But much of the pain over and beyond that, is working out in unseen ways, unseen measures of good: good in some cases to those who bear it; good in all cases to the world, and good of manifold sorts. You tell me I cannot demonstrate it. I know it. It is part of the mystery of pain. But I am so sure that "one above, in perfect wisdom, perfect love, is working for the best," that I confidently expect to see that these seeds of pain have borne an abundant harvest, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundredfold.

Isn't it likely to be so? Was not Christ Jesus a sufferer? Did He not learn obedience by the things that He suffered? Went He not through pain to victory? Is He not most manifestly divine when He takes upon Himself our sins, and bears them in His own body on the tree! And has not His painful life been the salvation of the world?

And we know that He says "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and again, "Lo! I come, I delight to do Thy will O God." The sacrifice of Himself for the redemption of the world, is His joy, although it is an indescribable and heart-breaking agony. So the joy of the perfect God is

His self-sacrifice for the salvation of men, and therefore as we become more and more like Him, the more do we fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church; and the more does all pain become a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

#### OUR CHIEF WANTS.

To make life worth living, in spite of, and by means of its sufferings, we do not need to have ALL the mystery lifted from the burden of human pain; but rather our wants are these: (1) first and mainly, "more life and fuller"; more of Christ Jesus dwelling in our hearts by faith. He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly, and it is only as we are baptized by faith in His sacrifice, into His spirit, that we can repeat His courageous, pain-enduring work.

(2) We need a fuller knowledge of, and a deeper faith in, the consolatory resources of Christ. They are infinite in range, unique in their adaptation, and effective in their application. His sympathy is perfect, His knowledge thorough, and His skill unfailing. Let us never distrust Him for a moment.

(3) We want an unshaken belief in the beneficent, though unseen, ministry of pain: a ministry gloriously salutary to ourselves certainly, but mainly through us to *others*. Nothing will corrode suffering like selfishness; nothing will transfigure pain like the effort to bear it bravely for the welfare of others.

And lastly (4) We should keep bright within us the anticipation of the richer, gladder life awaiting us in the painless home of God on high. We are going to live again. "Because Christ lives, we shall live also," and our next life will be

absolutely perfect in itself; and rendered more enjoyable by the discovery of all that we had lost here, for the sake of Christ and of His gospel.

Let us then be trustful and patient, hopeful and brave. Human Pain is neither a lawless nor a malign element in life. It "works together" with duty, and love and joy "for our good if we love God and seek first His kingdom"; and whilst we experience its keenest strokes, the sympathy and strength of Christ will sustain and cheer us; and whatever of its *meaning* we know not now, we shall assuredly, know, when we take our place in the all-revealing House of our Father on high.



## No. 7.—What Makes Life Poor?

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities?"—Hosea xiii. 9, 10.

THIS is one of the most concise passages in the writings of the prophet Hosea; a prophet whose utterances are more marked by pungent brevity and rousing clarion-like appeals than those of any other of the patriot preachers known as "the minor prophets."

The words of the original text are few, extremely few; and their connexion and arrangement leave ample room and verge enough for the waves of prophetic emotion to rise and fall with wonderful variety and significant emphasis. Our authorized version seizes and expresses with captivating beauty and force, the idea of the exclusive responsibility of the people of Israel for their present ruin, pathetically rebukes them for their culpable moral suicide, and then spans the horizon of national life with the many-coloured rainbow of hope, shot from the sun of salvation through the rains of Israel's penitence. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help. I will be thy king."

A second rendering of Hosea's words, places in striking contrast the two different fountains, from whence stream forth, on the one hand, the waters of national decay and death, and on the other the refreshing and fertilizing river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. "Thy captivity, O Israel, is from *thyself*: thy redemption is from thy God." Israel has made its own life poor: and God alone can make it rich again.

A third and preferable translation, and one marked by closer fidelity, at once, to the troubled emotions and to the chief purpose of the prophet, sharply defines the *inward* cause of Israel's fearful waste and imminent ruin, and yet treats with lofty scorn the flagrant absurdity of needy man opposing his only effectual helper. "*O Israel, thy destruction is this, that thou hast set thyself against God, even against God thy help. What avails, therefore thy king? Who in all thy cities will be able to help thee?*" God is Israel's only Saviour, and to forget, despise, or oppose Him is the most besotted, absurd, and ruinous folly of which a nation, or city, or man can ever be guilty.

Thus read, these words do not give voice to any merely local and exceptional ideas. They state some of the universal and enduring facts of human life, express that sense of the unredeemed poorness of our living which overtakes and afflicts most of us at some time or other; penetrate to the deepest sources of all the evils of our lot; of our unrest and vexation, our chagrin and misery, and open up for us the only safe and sure prospect of immediate relief, true solace, and abiding prosperity. Hosea's glowing indictment contains—

I. A PICTURE OF THE WASTED AND IMPOVERISHED  
CONDITION OF MEN.

II. A STATEMENT OF ITS SPECIFIC AND INWARD CAUSE.

III. AND A DECLARATION OF THE ONLY INFALLIBLE AND  
ADEQUATE REMEDY.

I. With one electric stroke of his genius, the prophet flashes before us the wasted and miserable condition of his fellow-countrymen. Israel is on the verge of social and political ruin. The glories of the reign of David have faded out of sight, and their memory is a rebuking reminiscence. The magnificent prosperity of Solomon has given place to loathsome decay and festering disease. Elijah has protested and preached, preached and protested in vain; and Elisha, his successor, has only added to the sum of ineffective work. Israel is wedded to its evil ways, hardened in its rebellion, forgetful of its true king, and dependent upon "the arm of flesh," opposed to the laws of God and the rule of His free and pure Spirit, and has become licentious and idolatrous, prodigal and proud, capricious and cruel. Wherefore God in His pitiful anger, warningly cries aloud by His prophet: "O Israel, see! it hurls thee into destruction that thou art against Me, Thy Help."

Now, what Hosea felt so keenly about the condition of Israel in the days of Jeroboam the Second, all *real* men feel at some time or other, about their own lives, and the lives of their fellows. Notwithstanding the strength and gladness that make conscious being sunny and bright; the loves of home and friends, of wife and child, that purify and elevate our manhood; the duty that disciplines, enlarges and rewards; and the good Lord, ever ready to forgive and purify, ennoble, and help;—yet an ineradicable conviction has forced itself

into men's minds that human life is a poor and beggarly thing, often discredited by petty meannesses, degraded by paltry selfishnesses, and made wretched by an acute misery, and always in danger of running to fearful waste and remediless ruin. We feel that man is marred; surely, sadly marred. He is not what he was meant to be, and has not what he might have. He seems destined to hold in his grasp the wealth of worlds, and yet he is a penniless bankrupt. He steps forth, as though he were every inch a king, and yet is a dependent and cringing slave. A paragon of power, still he is the veriest weakling that ever crawled worm-like to hide away in the damp earth. Made only a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honour, yet brute beasts teach him wisdom and chastise his folly. Unmistakeably the offspring of God, still he ignominiously debauches himself to become the ready tool of the Devil. Verily he is fearfully and wonderfully made; and as certainly, is he fearfully and wonderfully marred.

In a thousand ways, and in a thousand ages, this conviction of the profound misery of man has expressed itself. It is as much out of the Bible as in it; is the undertone of song and the sigh of prayer; the fire of heathen sacrifice and the goad to martyr devotion; the dark cloud in the sanctuary and the irrepressible difficulty on 'change, the Gordian knot of philosophy and the common-place of conversation, the surprise of youth, the perplexity of manhood, and the despair of age. It is universal. The air is full of it. There is no speech nor language where *that* voice is not heard.

And the *best* men have felt and mourned it most. Christ Jesus, who knew what was in man, pictured him, as a sheep, strayed from the fold, frightened, hungry and wasted, and the prey of ravening wolves. Paul, one of the most real



of all men, shrieked forth his deep agony in words of unfathomable significance, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death." "Out of the depths" of profoundest anguish, the noblest souls have cried for light and help. Aye, and you and I have known the bitterness of the human lot, and have joined in the wail of sadness and despair. Life has not been the thing we thought it. "Things are not what they seem." We are not what we were meant to be. Between our loved ideals and our achievements is a yawning gulf we cannot bridge. When we are most honest with ourselves, we are most annoyed at ourselves; and though we may momentarily feel as if a malign fate gripped us and held us against our wills, yet as we rise to our purest moods, we so loathe ourselves, that we are tempted to wish we could crush out our perverse being with the strong heel of our fierce self-contempt.

There is no denying it; life has *two* answers to the question—"Is life worth living?" One says, yes; it is so joyous in itself, so exhilarating in its flow, so refreshing in its associations and so inspiring in its hopes, that it is to be counted as beyond all price, worth more than rubies. Nay, says the second voice.

"Thou art so steeped in misery,  
Sure it were better not to be."

"By no means," answers the first voice. "Life is so grand in its possibilities, glorious in its gradual unfolding that we could pray for it to be made eternal, even as it is." "Never," cries out the second speaker; "look at its ceaseless vexations, and prodigious waste; its numberless illusions, irritating weaknesses, increasing corruptions and seething miseries."

Is that second answer true? Alas, yes ; there is no denying it ; and no use whatever in understating the darker and gloomier features of our existence. Call it what we will, there it is. Labels do not alter goods. You do not get twenty shillings for a penny by calling the penny a sovereign. And whether we talk of total depravity or partial, destruction or death, corruption or ignorance, we do not alter the *thing*. Man is wronged fearfully, incredibly wronged ; his faculties are impaired, substance wasted, pleasures poisoned, and his lot beggared indeed. Broad acres of arid desert occur in our experiences without fragrant flower or ripened fruit, or shining sun or distilling dew ; or cheerful friend or radiant hope. Man is not a finished structure, of gainly proportions, and commanding beauty, solid, coherent, and all-worthy. He is a mass of scattered, incoherent materials ; some finely chiseled but ill-placed, others where they ought to be, but rough and unhewn ; and altogether, waiting the skill of some gifted mind to plan, fix, finish, and enrich the whole. Whatever may be said about Israel in the days of Hosea, it would assuredly be no libel on man as we see him to-day to say that his condition is one of amazing waste and ruinous impoverishment. Somehow or other life is actually and often very poor.

II. What, then, we ask, is it that makes life so poor? What is the radical cause—the cause at the back of all other causes, of the poorness of men's lives? What is it fills the cup of life with bitterness, converts the sunny noon into hideous night, transforms the towers and minarets of Emmanuel's land into the ominous walls of the City of Destruction, and makes even Paul, in an agony of earnestness, for deliverance?

1. Most assuredly it is not from the mere want of a full purse, a salubrious climate, the charms of art, the refinements of culture, and a thousand other external and valuable accessories to man's comfort and well-being. Welcome as these are, their absence does not of necessity make living poor and wretched. Paul and Silas chant songs of joy in a gaol. John Bunyan is strongly calm, and beneficently active in a prison; and thousands of men have wrought righteousness and stored the ages with moral wealth on the scantiest fare and in the dreariest huts. You may make every man a Croesus, load his table with the luxuries of worlds, adorn the walls of his palace with the Art of Ages, and yet you do not forbid his life becoming a fribble or a moan. All history attests the wisdom of the saying of the greatest of Teachers; that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth."

2. It is equally manifest that physical "pains," tired nerves, blunted desires, and enforced solitude, do not dry up the springs of gladness and make existence a curse. For these have been faced in their most crushing forms by courageous souls, clad in delight, bountiful in benevolence, heroic in patience and enduringly good. Not even Paul's "stake" in the flesh, disturbs his equanimity or subtracts from the values of his life and work. Florence Nightingale is an invalid, rarely leaving her room: but the devoted philanthropy, that inspired her labours for the sick soldiers of the Crimea, still soothes her weariness and brightens her retirement.

3. And we will remind ourselves that "the sufferings" met in the highways of duty and devotion do not make life poor: for those who have borne them for Christ and His kingdom have not cared "to draw the dividends on their

virtue," but have gloried in tribulation as if it were triumph, loss as if it were gain, discredit as if it were fame, and suffering itself as if it were joy. Great purposes and unselfish desires, noble aims and grand enthusiasms, the love of God and of souls, have transfigured "the sufferings of this present time" into the enriching glories of eternity.

That being so, then, there is something more, something at the back of all our malign circumstances, behind the shattered nerve, the enfeebled health and crippled energy; deeper than the wild appetite, the stormy passion, the broken scheme, and blighted hope; and something imparting to them all their mischief-making power. It must be so. The "poverty" is not inherent in the scant cupboard, the quivering pain, the rack and the thumbscrew. Where is it then? What is it? How came it here? Question of questions: how is it to be got away again?

4. Hosea states part of the answer, and points with unerring accuracy to the rest. Israel was not marred in the making. God had not sown the dragon's seed of evil at the beginning. Abraham had not, nor Moses, nor David. *Israel mars itself* by neglect of God; by opposition to His laws and despisal of His gracious and infinitely available helpfulness. That is the seat of the whole mischief, the fountain-head of all their waste, impoverishment and misery. It is man himself that makes this life poor. He hurls himself to destruction by setting himself against the Lord his Maker and Redeemer.

And that is "sin;"—that conscious antagonism to God; "transgression of the law;" want of love to God and our neighbour;—that source of the misery in man and the wretchedness around him; that is what the Bible tersely calls "sin." And, forsooth, because the word is in the

Bible, some have written and talked as though the *thing* were nowhere else! Would to God, for His sake, and ours, it were not! But the *word* is *there* because the *thing* is *here*, in us men rending us to pieces with its fury, wasting our substance, poisoning our native pleasures, blinding the judgment; paralyzing the will; cursing the home, and corrupting the state; and making human life poorer and poorer every day.

Mallock represents "Mr. Stork" as saying "Sin is a word that has helped to retard moral and social progress more than anything." Don't let us be the victims of any such silly and contemptible subterfuge. Moral and social progress is not an affair of dictionary-makers. Naming things is not creating them. Calling an idiot Solomon will not make him sane. By designating "the great first cause" of all human misery; "ignorance"; "a struggle upward"; "depravity" "total depravity"; "infraction of the laws of nature"; and so forth, you are not altering the incontrovertible and palpable fact. It is impossible to wriggle that away by any controversies about words. It shews itself in them all. Leslie Stephen says, "Man is as great a fool as ever."\* Froude, the historian, declares "Moral evil is still the cause of *nine-tenths* of all the misery of the world": and he does not stop to find out the origin of the remaining tenth. Carlyle affirms in a fine passage "The want of loyalty to the Maker of this universe—he who wants that—what else can he have?.....You unfortunate man or nation, you will, right surely, you for one, stumble to the Devil; and are every day and hour, little as you imagine it, making progress thither."† Science, keeping to her own dialect, rebukes us

\* *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1880, p. 696.

† *Frederick the Great*, Vol. I. p. 270.

for "violating the laws of our being," and going counter to, "the nature of things"; but with all their varieties of representation, they only assert in the current speech of the hour, the same hard fact as Hosea, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, in and by this, that thou has set thyself against God, thine exceeding help."

We all know that man has by his very "make" an amazing capacity to hurt himself, and unfortunately for him he has used it. "God made him upright" and free; and must do so, in making him a *man* at all, and not a *machine*; and "man has sought out many inventions." Oh! the prodigious hurt man can inflict upon his life! That which is worthless cannot be hurt. Fling your smallest coin into the fire and the waste is slight; but fracture a statue, slit a picture, destroy a diamond, injure a child's limb, poison a child's mind, corrupt a child's heart; and every ascent you make in value is an addition to the gravity and enormity of the mischief. Were life not worth living, it would not be susceptible of such measureless mischief as now attends it: and if a man's life were not of his own making we should not so instinctively blame him for its poorness and misery as we do. You may injure a plant by putting it beyond the reach of the golden beams of the sun, and perhaps, no censure will reach you. You may tie up a limb and so destroy your "capital" in life, and no more than a solitary breath of scorn will reach your cheek: but when a man imbrutes his passions, buries the spiritual in the animal, prostitutes his intellect, and warps his conscience, we condemn him as wronging himself and wronging the society of which he is a part. We blame him for being what he is, and living as he does, because we have a fixed conviction that his conduct is under his control; and that it might

have been far better with him. We do not blame men for the colour of their skin. If an individual is only four feet high we do not denounce him as a great wretch who has let his opportunity slip: but we do condemn a man for bad habits, for the loss of purity, for the marring of his nature. We cannot rid ourselves of the idea that man is responsible for his moral condition.

I know there are moods when we treat ourselves with surprising leniency. Like Aaron we are ready to excuse ourselves with the false consolation "I cast it into the fire, and it came out a calf," As the child grieving over its broken toy, exclaims in self protection, "*It* broke, I didn't do it;" and the maid-servant protests the glass was cracked and "*it* broke;" so we try to shirk responsibilities and make Accident carry the blame of wrong deeds. But, after all, that is a kindness we reserve specially for ourselves. Let us be honest and take shame upon ourselves. We have sinned and done wickedly. Our misery is our own offspring. Let us rid ourselves of our petty self-excusing and urge our way to our Father in heaven, prepared to say "Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants."

We shall never get rid of the poverty and misery of life till we do. The first step upward is a heartfelt confession of our personal blamableness. "There is a truth," says Froude, "a truth not of narrow theology, but which lies at the very bottom of the well, at the fountain-head of human morality, namely, *that a man who would work out his own salvation must cast out self, though he rend his heart-strings in doing it*; not love of self-indulgence only, but self-applause, self-confidence, self-conceit, and vanity, desire or expectation of reward; self in all the subtle ingenuities

with which it winds about the soul. In one dialect or another, we must recognise that he is himself a poor creature not worth thinking of, or he will not take the first step towards excellence in any single thing which he undertakes."\*

III. And what is the next step;—and yet scarcely the next: for it is an essential and inspiring part of that first step, viz.,—rejoicingly to recognise the gracious and saving help there is for us sinful men in the Redeeming God. Hosea's rebuke includes a promise; even his indignant censure has a prophecy of coming deliverance; for Israel has destroyed itself in opposing Him who delights in mercy and is ready to forgive and redeem.

(1.) But, first, that help is personal and special: special in its relation to sin. God was pleased "in the fulness of time" to appear for us and to work out our eternal redemption. "He was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." The radical mischief in our condition is expressly met by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is sin that is central to our poverty and misery; and it is sin that is central to the work of Christ. He has a unique relation to it. He takes His name from that relation: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for he shall save His people from their sins." He derives His theme as a preacher from it. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Even miracles wrought by Him on men's bodies find their luminous interpretation in the message "Thy sins are forgiven thee." His life, whilst touching all human lives at all points, is marked off from every other life by the supernatural fact, that "He did no sin." Prophecy said He would "finish transgression;" "make an end of sins,"

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\* Froude's *Bunyan*, 29, 30.



"make reconciliation for iniquity," and "bring in everlasting righteousness;" and the pith and marrow of His work is that "He puts away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." At last He was raised to the right hand of the Father, "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins." "It is therefore a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Is not that unique? Is there any other being amongst us whose special mission is to put away sin? No! He alone *comes* to deal with it and make an end of it! If you seek intellectual wealth, a knowledge of the stores of genius; you may go to Goethe and Milton and Shakespeare, and they will take the keys from their girdle and open for you the temples of fancy and thought. Do you desire to master the secrets of nature, to track them to their source, to know how planets roll and shine? Sit at the feet of Maxwell, and Faraday, and Newton. But if you want to banish evil from your heart, to cleanse your conscience of guilt, to endow your will with power, to rise to the highest dignity and the broadest wealth, you must go to God in Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other." There is but one Redeemer of men. Hosea knew it and said, "There is no Saviour beside God," and then, with amazed indignation, he asks, "who will be your king if you reject Him; who out of all your cities will come to your help?" O sons of men; waste no time. There is but One whose work is to get rid of sin. "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee."

(2.) What is it Christ does with sin? "He bears it away." "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." "Whilst we were yet sinners Christ *died*

for us." "Hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us." He took away our *guilt* by voluntarily choosing and enduring our punishment. He does not take away our *blame*. That cannot be removed. Wrong is wrong, and the wrong-doer is for ever blamable; the sinner is still a sinner; the perjurer still a perjurer: the murderer still a murderer; the guilty man still a guilty man in fact, but the guilty man is forgiven, the perjurer is pardoned; the sinner is "through Christ" treated by the Father as *though he were not a sinner*; but a forgiven, restored, and glad and happy son: has as much freeness of access to the Father, as though he had never injured himself, or resisted his Father's law and love. Because "Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree;" and, "the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him," therefore "*our trespasses are not reckoned to us*," not set down against us, as obstacles and occasions for punishment, and so "with His stripes we are healed."

The effect is, all the difficulties in the way of the recovery of the *worth of life*, created by our wrong-doing, are lifted completely out of our path. The fetters of the past are broken. Fear of punishment is gone; and in so far as we may have to bear it, we shall welcome it, through our love of God and of holiness. We are free to make an entirely new start.

(3.) Nor is that all. Christ Jesus not only bears our sin away; but He bears into us all the forces of a new and strong, pure and glad life here and hereafter.

Jean Paul says, "Calm yourself; that is your first necessity. Be a Stoic if nothing else will serve." Another writer affirms, "Before a man can use his powers to any purpose, he must arrive at some conviction in which his intellect

can acquiesce." And it is Christ Jesus who effectually says to the troubled souls of men "Go in peace." "He is our peace." He brings the deepest calm to the spirit of man. He does. I am not theorising. I am not speculating. I am not theologizing. I state human experiences, verifiable facts in the history of men, and I say the *calm* which is the necessary basis for the building of a character of everlasting excellence comes to us from the Son of Man. I know it of my own personal knowledge, as distinctly and clearly as I know anything.

It is historical. Paul passed from his intolerable wretchedness to fulness of joy, and sang "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and recalling the promises of Hosea: he exclaims in rapture: "O Death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

John Bunyan says: "One day, as I was travelling into the country, musing on the wickedness of my heart, and considering the enmity that was in me to God, the Scripture came into my mind, 'He hath made peace through the blood of His Cross.' I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other. I was ready to swoon, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace."

Yes, and thousands upon thousands who have gone through the gates of tribulation, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.

Pardon and peace are followed by the acquisition of power. Christ delivers us from yielding to the appetites; from the guilty surrender to temptation, and the ready acquiescence in evil; meets the want of a holy purpose and a controlling will; and urges us onward in a life-long obedience to His Father and ours, even though it be at the expense of tortured natural feeling. Thus forgiven, calmed and quickened, we are fairly started on the way that leads infallibly to *THE LIFE MOST WORTH LIVING*. "Forgetting the sins which are behind, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus."

Who, then, amongst you, laments the poverty and wretchedness of his life, regrets broken resolutions, and degraded ideals, mourns over the ruins of his work, and is ashamed of them and of himself? Who feels the crushing weight of years of sin; the grip of habit and circumstance as of an evil fate? Hope in God! The prodigal may return; for the Father's house is open, and the Father's heart ready to forgive and save. Come out of the retreats of despair. Though the Holy God is the sinner's terror, He is also the sinner's stay. Hope in Him. Believe in Him. Behold the Lamb of God. He takes away the sin of the world. He is deliverance and sympathy and victory. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."



## No. 8.—The Life Most Worth Living.

IN concluding this course of sermons, I want to say a few words, to-night, about the Life *most* worth our living.

Everybody knows that human lives differ in their value ; in themselves and to their owners, to their neighbours and to the world. One is frivolous and foolish, vain and vanishing ; not a life, but a vacuum. Another is artificial and conventional ; not a living, growing force, but the regular movement of a well-made machine. Some lives are anchored in selfishness, and never get free to sail over the seas of experience, to the productive harbours of the world, and therefore remain poor and wretched to the end. Others are wicked and miserable, evoking only indignation and pity ; but there are lives, ruled by an intense love of God and righteousness, a chivalric hate of human evil, a glowing pity for wrong-doers, and so noble and lovely that men in their highest aspirations exclaim, " O that that life were mine, and my whole career like unto his ! "

In looking for and deciding upon the type of human life which is the Absolute Best for us all, two cautionary words need to be kept in mind.

First, we must remember, we have not to decide which is the most pleasant and enjoyable life ; or the life most easily lived ; or the one that yields the most of that coveted, but

vague and indefinable good, called happiness. We have rather to agree, if we can, as to what is the perfect example of living, for us men, *irrespective of the price that has to be paid for it*. We are so tempted to depreciate what is difficult of attainment, and to say the grapes are sour because they are beyond the tips of our fingers, that it is necessary to take special care we do not sacrifice our judgment of what is true to our love of what is easy. You are, for example, judging poems. Look straight into each one; and let its bright fancies and thrilling music possess you; enjoy its grace and power, without a moment's thought of the terrible toil and suffering through which the sweet singer has passed in giving birth to this child of genius. Have you to elect amongst several pictures? Sit calmly before each one, and permit the artist to speak to you from the canvas, to soothe, and inspire, and teach you as he can, and then frankly give your award without any disturbance from the invading thought that you, too, are a competitor. I have known the prizes of scholarships despised; the sharpened faculty, strong reason, tenacious memory, wide knowledge, treated as of little worth, but merely because they cost too much. Let us for a few moments forget the *cost to ourselves* of living the worthiest life; and merely look out for that manhood, in idea, and in fact, which deserves the exalted rank of being more fit than all others to become universal.

It is scarcely less important that the type we fix upon should be one completely and finally developed. There must be no chance of a reversal of judgment. We ought to be able to see it as a whole. Each scene, in each act, of the drama should be played to its last line. "You cannot judge of a building whilst the scaffolding is up." Men change their minds,—even change their ideas of what life is; and

as to what are the things of greatest value in it. The hero of the Roman Republic is not the ideal man of the Church in Jerusalem. We ought to find a type that has stood the test of the past, and gives fair promise of being unsurpassed in all the future. Can we?

RÉNAN ON MARCUS AURELIUS.

Just lately, as you know, a learned and brilliant Frenchman has been discoursing to us about a book which is, he says "the most purely human book in existence," "resplendent with the Divine Spirit," and sure to "retain its freshness to all eternity." That marvellous book was written says the lecturer by a man "whose whole life was spent in the study of returning good for evil;" who was "the greatest man of his century," and "is the glory of human nature." Here then, in Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome, and chief of Royal "Philosophers," we have our Perfect Example, our Model Man; and the one life that of all others is most worthy of universal imitation.

Is it so, Professor Rénan? May we rest content in this august presence; and with fixed resolve begin to fashion ourselves after his likeness? Shall every habit of his become ours? Do his *meditations* disclose the sovereign wisdom, the infallible truth? Is the philosophic Emperor the highest style of man?

Far be it from me to diminish by the smallest expressible fraction the real altitude of this truly great man. But let us not be deceived by the captivating eloquence and admiring eulogy of Professor Rénan. Who was it that had the weakness to associate with himself in the imperial purple and with full knowledge, to train as his successor in dominion the notorious Commodus, one of the most detestable characters

that ever lived; a man who was a shameless profligate, a disgusting buffoon, and a monster in debauchery; and of whom the historian says, "while he possessed all the qualities that can disgrace human nature, his whole history does not present a single trace of a generous or a kindly feeling?" It was none other than this "greatest man" of the second century. Who sanctioned the persecutions in which the aged Polycarp and the good Irenæus were put to death? It was this prince of the Stoic philosophy. Who was guilty (by the admission of his admirers) of "gross dissimulation" of "knowingly deceiving himself and others," of being "melancholy, circumscribed and ineffectual," an "insipid warrior;" and intolerant of toleration, and wholly lacking the courage of his opinions? None other than Marcus Aurelius! Where is it written that "generally wickedness does no harm at all to the universe, and particularly the wickedness of one man does no harm to another?" Nowhere but in "the most purely human book" in existence. Most assuredly, if France can give us no better life than that we must look elsewhere for the life *most worth living*.

#### NAPOLÉON ON GOETHE.

On the second of October, 1802, Napoleon the First had an interview with Goethe, the far-famed German poet; and after looking at him from head to foot, said, with an authoritative emphasis in his words, "*You are a man!*" And after the poet had left the presence of the Emperor, so impressed was this ruler of myriads with what he had seen that he turned to Berthier and Daru, two of his generals, and exclaimed "*He is a man! HE IS A MAN!*"

There is little question that Goethe "is the most splendid specimen of cultivated intellect ever manifested to the



world." I have read his poems with profound interest and deep delight. His conversations with Eckerman are full of value. His contributions to science are enough to make a reputation. But his biography fills me with pain ; it attracts and it repels ; it delights and it disquiets ; it charms and it incenses. Germany's greatest man has made the mistake of defining *self* by the word intellect ; a mistake as gross as to say a shilling is a sovereign, a door a house, and a Queen an empire. His paramount object throughout life was self-culture ; and he pursued it with unabated eagerness. According to Goethe, the culture of imagination is the chief end of man, and goodness and righteousness are degraded. Hence, the air of Weimar is stiflingly immoral. Life's holiest decencies are profaned in the name of genius. He is cruel to women. He is without public spirit, lacks intense hate of wrong, broad expansive philanthropy, and sympathy with self-sacrificing virtue and heroism. If Germany can give us no better example of manhood than that, again we must go somewhere else.

The same sad fate follows us in China with its Confucius ; in India with its Sakya Mouni ; in Greece with its Socrates and Plato, and in Arabia with its Mohammed. Whatever the excellence, and the help of any and of all of these men, yet the "Desire of all Nations," "the Chief amongst ten thousand," the altogether holy and lovely, the Perfect Best, is not amongst them. Nor do we meet with him until we come to

#### THE MAN CHRIST JESUS,

who belongs to no country, but is at home in them all ; is not of any particular race, though born a Jew, but belongs to humanity and is *the Son of Man* ; is not man in broken and

splintered fragments, but "man at his climax," a complete and harmonious whole; real, sinless and holy, as all men ought to be; and in whom we see *life's true aim realized; its true use displayed; its true joy experienced; and its perfection attained*. Here is the life most worth living by all men, in all ages of the world.

I will then, briefly examine this Pattern-Life, in several of its capital and central features, and then meet two or three objections that stand in the way of its adoption as an infallible Example for *childhood* in its tender dawning, *youth* in its most straining crisis, and *manhood* in its sternest conflicts, highest aspirations, and largest serviceableness.

#### HOW TO BEGIN LIVING.

I. And I note, at the outset, that the life most worth living, *must be dedicated to God and righteousness from the first*. The Boy Jesus is the pattern of a worthily directed, and dedicated life. When we meet Him in the gospels, it is crossing the barrier that separates his Nazareth Home from Society, with the grand resolve to do God's work and will. He is only a lad of twelve, but His mind is made up what to do with Himself. No misgivings weaken Him; no delays hinder His growth in grace and in wisdom. "I must" said He,—expressing, not the sudden and instantaneous choice of a moment, but the deliberately adopted purpose of His thoughtful heart, "*I must be about my Father's business.*" The pressure of a divine necessity is felt. The potent sway of a sublime aim is over Him. The moulding influence of the highest intent is fashioning His young and supple nature after the perfectest type. As plants naturally open their eyes sunward, and silently pray for light, so the expanding life of the Son of the Highest, leaps towards its ethereal source

and finds its earliest joy in doing the Father's bidding. *At first*, "He sought *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness": and, therefore, all other kingdoms of power and grace, and goodness and purity were added unto Him.

That's the only right way to begin living. God is and must be the Absolute Best; and to live for, and with, and in Him, and to render obedience to Him, from a passionate, and seemingly irresistible love of Him and of Righteousness, must of necessity be the worthiest course His offspring can take.

The values of every life are derived from its holder's aim. Purpose embraces destiny. Intention determines the worth of deeds. You cannot drift into moral excellence. You must aim at it, live for it, pray and believe and work for it. The mere force of the surging crowd will carry the laziest along the "broad road which leads to destruction;" but you must *see* the strait gate for yourselves, make for it, and "strive" to enter through, if you are to get into the city of God. Low, selfish, and mean aims will never carry your life aloft; fill you with heaven's glow, make God's gladness course through your whole being, and constitute your life into a perennial source of peerless help, and sweetest solace to men. Remember,

"'Tis a vile life that like a garden pool,  
Lies stagnant in the round of personal loves;  
That has no ear, save to the tickling lute  
Set to small measures,—deaf to all the beats  
Of that large music rolling o'er the world;  
A miserable, petty, low-roofed life,  
That knows the mighty orbits of the skies,  
Though nought, save light or dark in its own cabin."

Do you start with aversion from such a "vile," self-centred and wrong life? Then begin, and begin early, to work for God and for Right. Passionately love Him and it. Let His "business" be your "business" at once. Get your hand practised in it forthwith, as if you were already one of His "apprentices," and really meant to master your work. Remember Jesus was the first Child-Christian. Conform your life to His. Make His purpose your own. Be as He was, do as He did; live as He lived: if you want to live worthily and happily, and right joyously. That will put the finest meaning into life, the largest purpose into your deed, the sunniest brightness into your youth; prepare you for victory in hours of fierce temptation, and for a manhood of strength, beauty and grace.

Oh I cannot forget how gladly some who are your seniors would exchange chances with you, if that were possible. You know, and they know, by bitter experience, how easily you can bend the young sapling; but you must let the oak of a hundred years have its own way. Therefore say they to you, "Begin this divine business of seeking wisdom, loving right, hating evil, obeying God, being like Christ Jesus; begin it, as your *first* business. Would that we had done so. But we cannot. Our future is fixed and fated by our past, and now the morning hours are gone, the sun is sinking in the western sky, and our chances have left us for ever. We may be forgiven; but we can never reach the highest levels of proficiency because we began so late. Oh begin "to be about your Father's business," and begin now.

#### LIFE'S CRISIS.

II. I notice, secondly, the life that is most worth living is one marked by *victory over the temptation to use our powers for ourselves.*

There is an hour in life surpassing all others for fierce ferment, thrilling bliss:—it is when we taste for the first time the luxurious fruits of the tree of freedom, and forthwith take full possession of ourselves, exclaiming with uncontrollable delight: "Now I am my own master."

It is a crisis, and one of the severest we are called to face. The boy has gone, or is rapidly thinning off into a bright memory or an irritating rebuke. The man has not come, but is coming with fleetest foot. The ties of home are snapping, parental restraint disappears, and we drink of the exhilarating elixir of an independent and self-managed life. The soul is flooded with a consciousness of its unexpended strength; large ambitions are formed: bright hopes dance perpetually before us, and allure us to make grand experiments with our powers. The peril is immense and incredible. The epoch is one of decisive choice, of choice whose results, a thousand to one, are endless and irreversible. The momentous vote has to be given which settles whether we will use our power of hand and brain, heart and will, for *ourselves*, or for God and His righteous rule over the wide earth.

Would'st thou see what to do in this time of danger? Follow, then, the young Nazarene, led up of the Spirit into the wilderness. He has come forth from His retirement and has dedicated Himself, in pursuance of the high purpose of His boyhood, to the public discharge of His "Father's business." His baptism is attested by the opened heaven, the descending Spirit, and the Divine declaration of Sonship. His nature is charged to the full with supernatural power: for the Spirit is given to Him without measure. And now along the avenues of that very power comes the subtle temptation to use His new-found forces for Himself.

"You want bread," says the evil one, "You can make it. Do so, forthwith, from these stones, and satisfy your painful and prolonged hunger at once." "No," says Christ. "It is better to starve, than to suffer the serpent of selfishness to find a home in your heart. Any suffering is wisely borne that keeps its poison-fang under your foot. Man has a worthier life than that which is nourished by bread; even the life that gains its strength from obedience to the word of the Lord." Returning to the attack, Satan says, "But you are called to rule over men. Your power is that of a king. Obey me, and you shall have a kingdom at once; without any perilous work or painful Cross. Do as I wish you, and you shall have all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them." Instantly Christ repels the subtle insinuation, and elects to let His great powers be unused, and to suffer death in the way of duty, rather than submit even for a brief moment to the treacherous suggestions of the enemy.

That, my brethren, is the way to a victoriously worthy life, and that, too, is the only way out of the wilderness of temptation into which our young manhood is thrust. I am perfectly sure no man can be happy, or strong, or good, save by getting his own selfishness under his feet; and resolutely determining to use the whole of his nature, his sense and his spirit, his tact and his taste, his love and his life, for the service of God and men. We are so made, that in the nature of things we can only get to our best this way. Think to use your insight and capacity, your keen wit, and disciplined faculty, for the narrow ends of self, and you will poison your own happiness, corrupt the life of your home, and mar the life of humanity. Christianity is the consecration of the whole man to the service of men; "for

the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, all were dead. And He died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." And that,—even your scientific philosophers would tell you, if they were not afraid of naming Christ, is the law of human perfection, the law in obedience to which we enrich the individual, the family, the state, and the world; just as we injure ourselves by the slightest measures in which we disobey it. It is a verifiable fact that the One Worthiest Life ever lived amongst us men, did start in a loving self-dedication to God and Righteousness; and that it proceeded to victory over sin, and its effects, by a valiant resistance of fierce and accumulated temptations to use His supernatural powers for His own personal ends. Let us then when called to do grimmest battle with the adversary, "consider Him, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds"; and "resist, even unto blood, striving against sin."

#### MANHOOD PERFECTED.

III. I can only give another hint on this endless theme, and this I must give in the most summary way. It is this, that the life most worth living grows in strength and beauty, joy and worth to humanity, *by the cultivation of habits of prayer, meekness and gentleness, simplicity and naturalness, a frank and free enjoyment of all the Father's gifts in Nature and Society, a quivering sympathy with the victims of evil and misfortune; a calm and steadfast bearing of other people's burdens, a resolute and heated war against wrong, and an incessant going about doing good.* In the character of Christ all these habits are harmoniously blended, and gloriously operative, and by them He takes First Rank amongst all the

sons of men, and becomes the one Example worthy of universal and thorough-going imitation. Pre-eminent in Him are those inward and passive virtues which give such grace and finish to life. His dignity is in His humility. His divinity is proved by His unique self-restraint, incorruptible meekness, winning gentleness, and tireless pity for the suffering and the wronged. His greatest successes were displayed, not when children cried "Hosanna," and the people cut down the palm branches and strowed them along His kingly way : but when for love of us men He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross : refused to be harsh to trembling guilt, spoke tenderly to the doubting Thomas, and yearned with a heart-breaking grief over a lost world. In short, "never man spake like this man," or thought and felt and lived as He did.

"No mortal can with Him compare,  
Amongst the sons of men,  
Fairer He is than all the fair,  
That fill the heavenly train."

### THREE OBJECTIONS.

But it is time, I dealt with the objections, which many *feel* if they do not express, to the universal adoption of the life of the Lord Jesus as the type of the life *most* worth living. They are three ; and are based upon the *differences between His time and ours ; His circumstances and ours ; and His nature and ours.*

1. It is admitted, at once, that the life of Christ was one of singular, even exceptional excellence, and that its influence has been most salutary upon the progress of the world ; but it is held that you no sooner pass out of His quiet meditative century



into this practical and tumultuous age ;—leave the Hebrew race, with its finely educated conscience and unsuspecting faith, with the gates of heaven standing open night and day, and come down amongst the practical, go-ahead, world-conquering, ever-doubting Saxon people, who are hardly sure that there is a heaven at all, but are sure that if there be one the gates are closed ; than you find that you might as well attempt to build a house according to the plans of the Hebrew architects of the time of David, as seek to fashion character to-day and here, according to the Example of Jesus Christ.

Now let us be fair ! The ages of the Corsican Napoleon and of the Macedonian Alexander differed by an interval of more than twenty centuries, a changed civilization and a hundred other features ; and yet Napoleon confesses that the career of the ruler of Macedon inspired and stimulated and helped him. Their purposes were the same, their ambitions were common, and that was enough. TIME IS NOTHING TO MANHOOD. Essential manhood is for ever above time, and change and circumstance. It is a reality not a dream ; an abiding fact, not a passing opinion ; an eternal principle and not a vanishing emotion. Its fundamental qualities are the same in all ages ; all countries ; and all races ; notwithstanding much diversity of judgment on details. Abraham is God's friend at any date and in any land. Samson is a hero in any age. Joseph's finely conquering purity will touch all noble souls. David would have had his admirers in Sparta as well as Hebron, Athens as well as Jerusalem. Manhood is really independent of its externals. It wears different coats ; but it is not built up entirely of coats ; it has fixed elements which cannot be abolished. It is of God : indeed, it is *God with us*, and God is eternal. As light is always the daughter of the sun, whether you find her nursing

the graptolites of the Silurian sea, or illuminating the page of the nineteenth century philosopher ; sowing the deltas of the carboniferous times with acres of coal, or opening a path to the great Creator to-day ; so manhood is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And therefore as Christ was *the Son of Man, the true man, the perfection of manhood*, He is sufficient for the needs of Peter in the first century, and William Knibb in the nineteenth, for Paul in Rome and for us in London ; for men in all ages, who desire to live the most worthy life, and to be partakers of the Divine goodness.

2. But it is objected again that the *circumstances* of our life and His differ so sharply that the example is inadequate to our needs. He never, it is said, ruled in a home, never had sons to put to business, never felt the weakness of age, never passed through experiences precisely similar to ours. Professor Newman urged this objection, and not a few have felt a craving for a more thorough *detailed* resemblance between their circumstances and those of Christ Jesus. As if, forsooth, manhood were a question of circumstances, the handling of a plane, or carrying a hod of mortar, or writing a book, or measuring clothes, or chartering ships to Australia and the Cape ; and the imitation of Jesus meant that like Hunt, the painter, we should all go to Nazareth ; and walk its streets, sit in its workshops, and muse on its social life.

Again, I say, let us be fair ! Man's life consisteth not in the nature of the things in which he works. His fleshly hand will more or less take the colour of the dye he works in ; but he himself is by no means to be measured by the room he fills, the tools he handles, or the ground he covers in a day's march. *The victory of character over circumstances is the grand moral of all history, a moral illumined by ten thousand facts, and enforced in all ages and languages ; in the sublime*

career of Moses and in the simple experience of the Dairyman's Daughter, in the magnificent heroism of the statesman-prophet Daniel and in the trustful temper and serene strength of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. The value of a human model is not a question of height; of four or five feet, or so; or of weight or of occupation; but of all controlling purpose; of dominant loves, of the spirit that sways thought and affection and will, and gives vitality to deed. Lord Macaulay need not fling aside his pen and take to the shovel to teach us the value of tireless industry. Dr. Duff is not required to enlist in the British army to play the true hero, he can do it as a missionary, fired with an unquenchable enthusiasm and a resistless courage. So Christ need not go along every inch of the rugged path we have to climb; it is enough that He reveals the aim and spirit and character of our pilgrimage and supplies the *principles* for the solution of every difficult problem our journey may produce.

3. The strongest and subtlest objection starts from the fact that Christ's *nature* is divine, different from ours, and superior to it, and that therefore He, by His very Deity, is for ever disqualified from occupying the post of universal model for us poor and sinful men. You set a girl a copy, and tell her to write. She looks up plaintively and says, "I can't. I have no hands." You tell a boy to recite. He writes on a slate, "I can't. I am dumb." You tell a man to walk, even as Christ walked. He says, "I cannot. Christ is God. I am not."

There is something in this objection. No doubt Christ's nature differed from ours, as we find ourselves, when we are in enmity against God. "He is God over all, blessed for ever." "God was in Christ." "Christ was God manifest in

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the flesh." But the New Testament teaches us to look on Christ, as in no way so different from us *as to lift Him out of our range*. On the contrary, it distinctly bids us think of Him as occupying the same level of life as ourselves. He is not only bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and grew as we grow, through childhood and youth to manhood; but He is also heart of our heart, and mind of our mind: temptible as we are from the consciousness of great powers; and *in all points like us*. He was flesh and blood, heart and brain, mind and conscience and will, as we are. He hungered, and was tempted by it; lost friends, and shrunk from the touch of death; felt the tides of grief ebbing and flowing within His being, and was acutely sensitive to all the experiences common to us; and was indeed as thoroughly human as any one of us. *But His manhood was filled with God*. "He was the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

And what, pray, saith the Scripture as to the man who *abideth in Christ*? Is he not a new creation? Are not old things passed away? Is he not born again? Is not Christ Jesus in him, as God was in Christ, *i.e.*, is not God in him and is he not a partaker of the Divine Nature, *i.e.*, is he *not like Christ in His nature*? It is a profound mystery, on the very fringe of which we take off our shoes, as on holy ground: but it is a fact that the Scriptures which bid us "*walk even as He walked*," positively assure us, that we are made akin to Him in our nature, and in the qualities and capacities of our new being. Christ Jesus does not shrink from the closest identification with us. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Ashamed? nay! He says to the Father: "The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and them in me: I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

To Paul this was a real and rejoicing experience. "I am crucified with Christ, yet nevertheless I live: Yet not I but Christ liveth in me": The life in the flesh goes for nothing; it is swallowed up, absorbed by the new life that courses through and gladdens his whole being.

Let us not fear then, the life most worth living may be lived by us. Pardoned by the sacrifice of Christ, guided and inspired by the example of Christ, and filled with the all-capacious Spirit of Christ, we may yet attain that blissful mood, in which we shall be able to say without fear or misgiving: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

#### THE STRONGEST OBJECTION OF ALL.

Yes, but says one, all that does not lift the primal difficulty of believing in God, at all, and in Him as knowable and lovable; and in the immortality of us men. It rather forces us upon it; and makes its angles the sharper. I admit it: and I deeply sympathize with every one who is crushed and perplexed with this weight of painful and paralyzing doubt. I know what it is, and I cannot speak or think lightly of it. I have felt its pressure keenly and almost agonizingly; and I have not a shadow of misgiving that I can point you to an effectual deliverance.

Briefly, it is this.

(1.) I was obliged to admit that Christianity is here; it is part of the life, of the best and worthiest life of the day. That I could not deny. It is moreover a historical fact. It is as undeniably in the third century as it is in the last; and in the second as it is in the nineteenth. There is no more denying that, than there is the splendid sun of the mid-day heaven. And its corruptions notwithstanding, it is

a glorious history, a history of slow but real progress, and must have an adequate cause.

(2.) I found a new type of character in that second century; and by the side of it "the gospels." Those "gospels" gave credible evidence of being the product of the earlier century; and they trace this new and prolonged effect to the man Christ Jesus. *THAT MAN IS SINLESS.* This was the startling phenomenon. No one could be more pitiful to sinners; no one more sensitive to infirmity; and yet "He did no sin." He tells others to repent; but never repents Himself; to pray for forgiveness; but never asks for it Himself. It seemed to me He was not as other men are; and therefore could not have come here as other men did. His holiness is supernatural. He must be supernatural.

(3.) Seeing what Christ was, I could not but trust Him and trusting Him I could not but welcome His words when He said "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you:" and I found that His words were "spirit and life," and He became to me "the way, the truth, and the life."

(4.) Faith in God and immortality became a delight. The love of God became joy and strength, and the service of men for God's sake an unspeakable privilege.

(5.) And now after more than twenty years' experience I cannot be brought by any process to doubt the efficiency of that method. It is part of my life. It is my solace now. Again and again I have suggested this same method to men and women who have been exiled in the Egypt of scepticism, and they have found it "a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day." Roman Catholics, driven into Scepticism, by the

false and unchristian representation of Christ given by that Church, have laid hold of this thread and travelled out of subterranean gloom into the light of day. And I proclaim it now; with an invincible faith in the Master's word, "no man cometh to the FATHER but by ME," and moreover, that no man cometh to the life most worth living save by the same Redeemer and Helper and Guide.

FINIS.









